CHAUCER'S USE OF HIS PERSONA IN HIS DREAM POEMS THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS, THE HOUSE OF FAME, THE PARLEMENT OF FOULS AND THE PROLOGUE TO THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

Huriye Reis

Hacettepe University
Institute of Social Sciences

A Master's Thesis
Submitted to the
Division of Western Languages and Literatures
The Department of English Language and Literature
in Accordance with the Regulations of the
Institute of Social Sciences

ANKARA
June, 1989

7650

"Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü'ne"

İşbu çalışma jürimiz tarafından İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı'nda YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ olarak kabul edilmiştir.

Başkan :
Prof.Dr. Emel DOĞRAMACI

Üye :
Prof.Dr. Himmet UMUNÇ

Üye :
Yrd.Doç.Dr. Yalçın ÇOŞKUN

Onay

Yukarıdaki imzaların, adı geçen öğretim üyelerine ait olduğunu onaylarım.

..../..../19..

6 TEMMUZ 1989

Prof.Dr. Tuğrul Çubukçu
Enstitü Müdürü

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my grateful thanks to Professor Doğramacı for her advice and encouragement during my studies.

I would sincerely like to express my profound gratitude to Professor Himmet Umunç to whom I am most indebted for his invaluable help and continuous support in the preparation of this thesis. If it were not for his presence, this study would not have been possible.

I am also much indebted and grateful to the guidance and help of Associate Professor Burçin Erol with whom I have studied for over six months, and have benefited from her continuous support and encouragement.

My sincere thanks also to my family, my friends and those who have kindly helped and encouraged my study.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı Chaucer'in dört rüya şiiri Düşes'in Kitabı, Şöhret Evi, Kuşlar Parlementosu ve İyi Kadınlar Destanı Prologu'nda rüya gören kişinin fonksiyonları ve genel özelliklerini belirlemektir. Bu amaçla ilk önce rüya şiir geleneğinin doğuşu, gelişimi ve İngiliz Edebiyatındaki yeri incelenmiştir. Chaucer'ın rüya gören kişisinin bütün şiirlerinde ortak bazı özellikler gösterdiği ve bu haliyle aslında Chaucer olduğu ispatlanmaya çalışılmıştır. Ayrıca Chaucer'in rüyacısının kültürlü, eğitim görmüş bir şair olması ve karakterindeki belirsizlik nedeniyle geleneksel rüya şiir rüyacısından farklı olduğu görülmüştür.

Tezin birinci bölümünde, Düşes'in Kitabı'ndaki rüya gören kişinin bazı iddiaların aksine, saf, basit, sürekli gaf yapan biri olmayıp, iyi okumuş, saygıdeğer, ne yaptığını bilen bir insan olduğu ortaya konmuştur. Chaucer, bu şiirinde rüyacısını yasta olan dükü teselli etmek ve aynı zamanda hayat ölüm ilişkisi, sevgi ve talih konularına açıklık getirmek amacıyla kullanmıştır.

İkinci bölümde, Şöhret Evi'nde rüya gören kişinin Düşes'in Kitabı'ndaki özellikleri taşıdığı ve yine eğitimli bir şair olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Şöhret Evi'ndeki

kişi ayrıca ironik ve mizahi bir yaklaşımla ele alınmıştır. Ayrıca, Chaucer "persona"sı yoluyla tarafsız bir şekilde şöhretin gerçek anlamını ve edebiyatla olan ilişkisini inceleyerek okuyucuyu bu kavramları kişisel olarak değerlendirmeye yöneltmiştir. Yine, rüya gören kişinin karakteri yoluyla ortaçağ insanı ve şairlerinin belli eğilimleri eleştirilmiştir.

Kuşlar Parlementosu'nda rüya gören kişinin karakterinin diğer iki şiirdekilerinkiyle aynı olduğu görülmüştür. Tarafsız kalma ve yorum getirmeme tutumunu sürdürmektedir. Burada, şiirin kahramanı canlı bir aşk tartışmasına şahit olmakta ve bu yolla Chaucer aşka karşı değişik tutumları sergilemekte ve aşkı değişik kriterlerle tanımlamaktadır.

Dördüncü bölümde, İyi Kadınlar Destanı Prologundaki rüya gören kişi incelenmiştir. Bu şiirde rüya gören kişinin aşk ve diğer konulardaki tereddüt ve kararsızlığının tamamen kaybolduğu şahsın mutlu bir aşık olduğu görülmektedir. Yine de Chaucer'ın kendi kendini eleştirmesi ve gülünç duruma düşürmesi devam etmektedir. Bu şiirde ayrıca rüya gören kişinin Chaucer'mı yoksa tamamen hayali bir kahraman mı olduğu sorusu cevaplanmıştır.

Sonuç olarak, Chaucer'ın rüya şiirlerinde rüya gören kişinin, şiirlerdeki ipuçlarına dayanarak Chaucer'ın kendisi olduğu ve büyük ölçüde geleneksel rüya şiir kahramanından farklı olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to determine the nature and functions of Chaucer's dreamer in his four dream poems the Book of the Duchess, the House of Fame, the Parlement of Foules and the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women. To do this, however, a through study of the dream conventions, its emergence, development and achievements in English Literature have been examined. It has been found out that Chaucer's dreamer in his all dream poems has certain common characteristics, and, as such, appears to be Chaucer in disguise. Moreover, he is quite different from the traditional dreamer as being a well-learned practicing poet, with a peculiar touch of ambiguity about his nature.

In the first chapter of the thesis, it has been proved that the dreamer in the Book of the Duchess, contrary to some claims, is not a naive, simple-minded, blundering person. He is, on the contrary, a well-read, respectful and able figure. He is used by Chaucer to console his mourning duke and meanwhile to shed some light on the question of life and death relationship, love and especially fortune.

In the second chapter, it has been seen that the dreamer of the House of Fame has the same features

of personality of the dreamer of the Book of the Duchess. He is again presented as a well-read poet, not without touch of humour and irony, however. In the House of Fame, the dreamer is made the vehicle of Chaucer's impartial treatment of poetry and Fame, and the real meaning of Fame and its relation to the art of poetry has been brought to individual judgment. Through the dreamer, moreover, certain tendencies of medieval people and poets have been ridiculed.

In the Parlement of Foules, the dreamer's nature has been found to be almost the same with the two previous dreamers. He is again a learned poet of love; impartial and devoid of conclusive comment. He witnesses a lively debate of love, through which Chaucer presents different approaches to love and gives a definition of love conception as it is judged by various standards.

In the fourth chapter, the dreamer of the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women has been evaluated and it is found out that the uncertainty of the dreamer as regards love and any other subject, such as the content of the books, has vanished. The dreamer of the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women is depicted as a happy lover; however, in the dream section, Chaucer's self-depreciation is carried on. Moreover, the question of dreamer's identity

that whether he is Chaucer or fiction has been answered by direct references to Chaucer's actual works.

In conclusion, it has been decided that the dreamer of Chaucer's dream poems is Chaucer and he differs from the conventional dreamers as a self-reliant, objective, self-sufficient person.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The dream poem was one of the most popular and widely-used medieval literary forms. It was frequently used in medieval English and Continental literature. Besides a large body of anonymous writings, there are a number of dream poems written by the early medieval poets from Dante, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun on the continent, to Chaucer, Langland and the Gawain poet in England.

The tradition of the dream poem can approximately be traced back to the earliest times when poets were considered seers, who, in prophetic ecstasy, saw and told of the other world. Originating from a similar belief, classical mythology appears to be an important factor for the dream poetry to develop into a literary form. In classical myth, the land of sleep, which was ruled by Morpheus, had two doors, out of which two kinds of dreams were issued: through the ivory gate came the dreams conveying the truth and through the horn gate came the false dreams.[1] The first use of this dream myth can be traced back to Homeric epics, where the gods influenced the actions of people by sending them either false or true dreams.[2] This dream myth, later, strenghtened by Macrobius' classification of dreams[3] in the fourth century,

furnished the core of the dream poetry of the Middle Ages.

Another important example of dream poetry was also a literature of spiritual adventure produced by the ancient authors of classical times. In the Odyssey, Odyseus' wanderings take him to the " other world " Tartarus, where he gains some hidden knowledge from the soul of Teiresias.[4] He performs a ritual and speaks with some of the dead. Afterwards, he is allowed to see the torments exerted on the souls of the impious: Tityus being eaten alive by vultures, Sisyphus forever pushing his stone. Although these Homeric instances could hardly have been known to the Middle Ages, they were apparently know indirectly through Latin references to them. For example, the episode in the Odyssey came to be known through the scene written in imitation of it by Virgil in the Aeneid. In Book VI, Aeneas receives instruction from the Cumaean Sybil on how to visit his dead father, Anchises, in the underworld. There he sees the damned souls undergoing the same torments described in the Odyssey.[5] Yet, Virgil made the vision of judgment more comprehensive and, thus, Aeneas was allowed to see the homes of the blessed as well as the souls of the people yet unborn. Hence, Aeneas saw the future, furthermore, he was informed about his own destiny and about the future of Rome. This vision of the other world as hell for the damned and heaven for the blessed was in agreement with the Christian doctrine. It is not surprising,then, that

Dante was guided by Virgil in the underworld in his "Hell" and Virgil, also, along with Dante was cited by Chaucer as an authority on the description of the underworld.[6]

The journeys of the epic heroes to the underworld were generally represented as physical adventures that the hero was to undergo before reaching his home as in the Odyssey or founding a new city for his people as in the Aeneid.[7] However, in some works, such as Cicero's Somnium Scipionis, in classical literature this kind of adventure was presented in the form of dream experience. In the Somnium Scipionis, the closing part of De Re Publica, Cicero, following Plato who closes his work with a vision of Er, finishes his work with the dream of Scipio. This last part was all that medieval poets knew about De Re Publica. In Somnium Scipionis, Scipio, after a long conversation with King Masinissa about his late grandfather, Scipio Africanus, falls asleep and has a dream in which his grandfather appears to him. Africanus foretells his grandson's future and speaks to him of the nature of heavens, the smallness of the earth, the vanity of earthly fame and the immortality of the soul. Like the journeys to the underworld in Homer and Virgil, Scipio's vision contains instruction about the fate of the human souls after death: those with good deeds go to heaven and those who have given themselves up to

worldly pleasures are tormented for many years. Scipio begins his dream by telling that he had been talking about his grandfather and that is why ne appeared to him in his dream, for, he says, our dreams are usually occassioned by our recent waking thoughts. This attempt to give plausibility to the fictitious dream by offering psychological causes was imitated in the dream poetry of the Middle Ages. Thus Chaucer in the Book of the Duchess reads of lovers separated by death before he dreams of them. In the Parlement of Foules, he reads the Somnium Scipionis itself and suggests that this may be why he has dreamed of Africanus.

Macrobius' Commentary of Somnium Scipionis was another significant influence on medieval authors. In this commentary is included an elaborate classification of different kinds of dreams. According to Macrobius there are five kinds of dreams. Two of these:nightmare or insomnium and the apparition or visum or phantasma are insignificant and therefore are not worthy of interpretation. The first of the other three, the somnium or enigmatic dream contains a veiled truth which requires interpretation. The second, visio or prophetic vision shows something which actually comes true. The last one, oraculum or the oracular dream is the one in which a parent, a pious or revered man, a priest or even a god appears and gives information or advice.[8] Many

classical and some medieval dreams belong to the category of oracular dream, this is probably because oracular dream was the most convenient for didactic purposes.Yet, the medieval poet also used somnium as a literary mode of expression, as a device in, for instance, The Pearl and the Romance of the Rose.

Beside the classical tradition there was also a powerful Judaeo-Christian stream of influence upon medieval dream poetry. The explicitly presented visionary elements in the Bible provided a justification for a literature of dreams and visions. In the Book of Numbers, God, emphasizing the significance of dreams, speaks to Aaron and Miriam as follows:

> If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision or I will speak to him in a dream.
> But it is not so with my servant Moses who is most faithful in all my house.
> For I speak to him mouth to mouth, and plainly: and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord.
> (Numbers 12:6-8)

Again, Elihu in the Book of Job asserts the significance of dreams:

> By a dream in a vision by night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, and they are sleeping in their beds: Then he openeth the ears of men, and teaching instructeth them in what they are to learn.
> (Job 33:15-16)

There are many examples of divinely inspired visions in the Bible. In the Old Testament, for instance, there are the dreams of Pharoah and Joseph[9] which are referred to both by Chaucer and Langland in their poems. There is the Book of Ezehiel which begins (giving the precise date like many medieval dream poems):

> Now it came to pass, in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, when I was in the midst of the captives by the river Chobar, the heavens were opened, and and I saw the visions of God.

The whole book relates his visions. In the New Testament, there is an important reference in St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians.[10] However, the most powerful and influential of all the visions in the Bible was that of St. John the Divine, described in his Apocalypse or Revelation:

> At this point I had another vision, and saw an open door in heaven. And the voice that sounded like a trumpet, which I had heard speaking to me before, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this." (Revelation 4:1)

In his vision, St. John sees heaven with God in the form of both father and the Lamb. The future of the world is revealed to him, including the end of all things and the resurrection of the dead. Finally he sees heavenly Jerusalem. The visions of St. Paul and St. John were taken as mystical experiences by theological writers and were frequently referred to by the writers of medieval dream poems.

The early centuries of Christianity saw the growth of religious vision literature, which originated from the visions in the Bible, on a large scale. The first product of this period was the Apocalypse of St. Paul. It was translated in the sixth century from Greek into Latin. It was widely read and, right down to the fourteenth century, it was even accepted as an authentic part of the Bible. Like many others, The Apocalypse of St. Paul was an influential work on medieval visions of the other world. Moreover, it was accepted as a part of a unified Classical and Scriptural tradition of spiritual adventure.

The second example of Christian visions was produced several years later and like the Apocalypse of St. Paul, it deals with the fate of the souls after death. In Hincmar's Visio Bernaldi, Bernaldus has been lying ill for four days, at the point of death. When he recovers he explains that he has had a vision of the other world. Bernaldus relates that in the underworld he met some person he knew and this person asked him to ask his friends to pray for him. Bernaldus comes back to the world, fulfills his duty and when he returns to the underworld to see the result, he finds out that the person who had been tormented previously has been released from his pains through the prayers of his friends. In Bernaldus' vision there are some political implications as well. This use of the other world vision for theological and political purposes was taken up later by Dante in the Divine Comedy. Even in the Pearl, a similar structure can be recognized.[11]

The final example of Christian visions, which more or less influenced dream poetry, is the vision of Drythhelm in Bede's Ecclesiastical History.[12] Similar to Bernaldus, Drythhelm has a vision while he is lying ill. In his dream, accompanied by a handsome man in a shining robe, Drythhelm travels to the northeast to see the souls of men who have repented only on their deathbeds. These souls have been tormented in flames and ice. Afterwards he sees the mouth of hell itself and his vision ends with a glimpse of heaven.

As stated by Spearing (1976:18), medieval religion and courtly culture had directed themselves towards ideals. It was thought that these ideals could be realized better in poetic dreams than in actual waking life. Besides, it was expected that something could be learned from real dreams and hence from literary dreams. Therefore, it appears to be a common purpose of medieval dream poems to give advice or warning about the future, as well as to discuss certain philosophical, moral, and sometimes political issues which could otherwise not be dealt with in real life. Accordingly, as a doctrinal vision, Consolation of Philosophy, which was translated both into French by Jean de Meun and into English by Chaucer, has been a highly influential work. The most important characteristic of this work that was imitated by later dream poems is the personification of Philosophy as a lady. In the Consolation of Philosophy, some of the details of Philosophy's appearance are symbolic. However, it is not the smybolic value of the poem that attracted the later poets; rather its importance lies in the conversation between Boethius and Lady Philosophy, which implies that Boethius who is undergoing the conflict represented in the fiction both is and is not the same person as the Boethius who created the fiction and resolved the problems depicted (Spearing 1976:19). The same deliberate doubleness of effect will be seen in some dream poems, especially in Chaucer,where the poetic "I"

both is and is not the writer of the poem. Moreover, Boethius' discussions on Fortune, nature of happiness, nobility and the good, on providence, predestination and free will are the subjects to be taken up in medieval dream poems. Another element in the Consolation of Philosophy is the journey of the mind through the heavens towards God.[13] Chaucer, Douglas and Lindsay are later to represent such mental journeys.

Alan de Lille's Complaint of Nature, which has always been regarded as a doctrinal vision, in a way, fills the gap between the Consolation of Philosophy and the medieval dream poem. The Complaint of Nature imitates the form of the Consolation of Philosohpy and like Boethius' vision, it begins with the appearance of a personified figure, Nature. The visionary of the Complaint of Nature is not able to comprehend the content of his vision; in this he becomes the forerunner of many medieval dreamers who fall below the level of their dreams. Moreover, the subject includes sexual love which comes to be the characteristic subject matter of courtly dream poetry in French and English literature. Furthermore, The Complaint of Nature has a direct influence upon the Romance of the Rose which served as a model for almost all of the medieval dream poets.

In the twelfth century, with the rise of courtly literature, dream poetry underwent a process of

secularization. From the twelfth century onwards, the courtly cult of secular love produced fictional visions, where the place visited was a secular pseudo-paradise, a walled garden of Cupid inhabited by mythological and personified figures. Hence, the doctrine was an erotic pseudo-theology. The most important of these secular visions and the first typical dream poem is the Romance of the Rose. The poem begins with a reference to Macrobius' commentary on the Somnium Scipionis and it discusses the validity of dreams, claiming that dreams sometimes foretell the future; in this introduction the dreamer implies that his dream is one of that kind:

> Many men say there is nothing in dreams but fables and lies, but one may have dreams which are not deceitful, whose import becomes quite clear afterward. We may take as witness an author named Macrobius, who did not take dreams as trifles, for he wrote of the vision which came to King Scipio. Whoever thinks or says that to believe in a dream's coming true is folly or stupidity may, if he wishes, think me a fool; but for my part, I am convinced that a dream signifies the good and evil that come to men, for most men at night dream many things in a hidden way which may afterward be seen openly.[14]

This opening will become a regular element in the dream poems of the fourteenth century. The dream takes place in May; it is springtime, the season of love when there is a process of rebirth in nature. The dreamer walks among trees and flowers in blossom and with singing birds. He washes his face in a river, walks through a meadow which runs alongside the river. Most of these elements, together with the personifications, such as Hate, Crime, Covetousness, Avarice, Hypocrisy, Delight and Idleness in the garden of Love, will become the common characteristics of later dream poems. Similarly, in Froissart's dream poem Paradys d'Amours the same structure is followed. Moreover, a further development with regard to the narrator is also seen. In Paradys d' Amours and in his other poems, Froissart's narrator is more individualized and, as will be seen later in Chaucer, the role of the narrator is more prominent.

By the fourteenth century, the dream poem had become an established literary form which could be put to various uses. Consequently in Italy Dante wrote his Divine Comedy, a journey to Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, for satirical purposes; meanwhile French writers were using the form for edification in love and in many other subjects.

As for the English dream poetry, it was much influenced by and shaped upon the continental works. The

English dream poem has as its model the dream poems of any kind written until 1350s. When the English poets started writing dream poems they were conscious of writing in an old tradition, which they displayed through the references to several works of the previous periods and through the general pattern they followed. However, long before the dream poem took its last shape, some poems, which were either partly or completely dream poems, had been written. One of these was The Dream of the Rood, copied in the tenth century, in which, although the speaker is an inanimate object, the Cross, the dreamer is instructed about how to gain eternal bliss. Also Bede, in Ecclesiastical History, tells the story of Caedmon, who, in spite of his inability to sing, is ordered in his dream to sing a hymn and from then on becomes a very good singer of biblical events.[15] In Disputisoun Between the Body and the Soul, a dream poem of the middle English period, the poet, lying in bed on a winter night, sees a vision. It appears to him that the body of a proud knight is lying on a bier. The soul of the knight is about to depart. But, before leaving the body, the soul rebukes it for its ill deeds. The body, in return, accuses the soul, however, in the end the body admits its failure and asks for forgiveness. Yet, it is too late for both; they are carried to hell to pay for their sins.

The first authorized dream poems date from 1350s or 1360s. This period was an era of turbulence and

decline due to the continual warfare, plague and several rebellions. The society was moving into decadence socially and culturally when the three poets of English literature appeared to bring it almost to perfection. These three poets: Chaucer, Langland, the Gawain poet, and later Gower too, wrote dream poems and contributed much to the dream form. Both Langland and the Gawain poet used the dream poem for theological purposes in Piers the Plowman and the Pearl respectively. Chaucer, being the most prolific dream poet of the period, wrote four different poems, all of which differ from the poems of the Gawain poet and Langland both in subject matter and general treatment. As a court poet, Chaucer wrote poems which are generally referred to as "love visions" although the subject is not necessarily only love.

In structure the English dream poem followed the French dream frame. It was always a first person narrative and it tended to frame experiences that could not occur in normal waking life: visions of the other world, encounters with the dead, or meetings with personified, allegorical, mythological or symbolic beings. The dreamer usually had a psychological reason to account for his dream. It was usually springtime and the dreamer, having fallen asleep in a convenient place, was guided by an important figure who taught him some theological or secular doctrine.

However, Chaucer employed the dream form somewhat differently. In his four dream poems: The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame, The Parlement of Foules and The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, although usually conforming to the general pattern, he used the mechanics of the form in a peculiar way. This peculiarity stems, to a great extent, from his great amount of knowledge of all the visionary works and dream poems written up to his time. Chaucer translated the Romance of the Rose which had a great influence upon his treatment of the dream poem. His extensive use of many different parts of the Romance of the Rose in the Book of the Duchess[16] makes it clear that before 1369 Chaucer was familiar with the French poem as a whole. He read not only the part written by Guillaume de Lorris but also that by Jean de Meun. Moreover, Chaucer's first acquaintance with many writers was also through the authoritative passages of the Romance of the Rose. It has been proved that Chaucer either rewrote some lines of the Romance of the Rose or directly took some descriptive passages from it. As observed by Fansler (1965:232) as well as many others, the Romance of the Rose was a source of inspiration for Chaucer; it served him with new ideas and new points of view on old ideas. However, many critics note that Chaucer never acted as a copyist of Guillaume de Lorris or Jean de Meun.[17] Although his dream poems have much in common with the Romance of the

Rose, in their general purpose and in many details they are apparently original. Surely, Chaucer had a continued respect for Jean de Meun. In the Book of the Duchess he freely uses Reason's discourse on the fickleness of Fortune, and obviously various other sections of Jean's work interested Chaucer.[18] In fact, he shared Meun's critical, inquiring attitude toward life and its problems as well as the tendency to visualise abstractions.

Chaucer's use of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, as did the Romance of the Rose, played a great role in the formation of his philosophy. He is definitely indebted to Boethius for his conception of Fame in the House of Fame.[19] Besides, Consolation's influence can be observed in the Book of the Duchess as well.

In addition to the Romance of the Rose and the Consolation of Philosophy, Chaucer's poems suggest also the influence of Dante and Alain de Lille. Especially in his dream poems the influence of The Divine Comedy and the Complaint of Nature can easily be traced. Besides all these works, Chaucer refers to many other classical and medieval authors whose works either he himself read or was acquainted with through the major works of his time.

Chaucer's three dream poems: The Book of the Duchess, the House of Fame, and The Parlement of Foules belong to the early period of his poetic career. The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women is a product of his mature period. His imagination was very responsive to the potentialities of the form. In the dream frame, he certainly, found open field to experiment with the theme and the subject matter. As an experimentalist,he used the dream frame for various purposes in each of his poems. The form as well as the content differs from the conventional dreams.His dream poems have definite structural patterns. They open with a narrator either occupied with a personal problem or musing upon a particular phenomenon. Then follows a reference to a classical work, which is often summarized. Finally the dreamer falls asleep and the dream ensues.

Chaucer's dreamer, who may be called his persona, appears to be different from the personas of other dream poems. In the Romance of the Rose the dreamer of Guillaume de Lorris tells the progress of a youthful love affair; the dreamer of Jean de Meun is used satirically to deal with some issues considered important in the Medieval Ages. In the Pearl, the persona is a naive, illiterate ordinary man used by the poet for didactic purposes and for the discussion of certain theological doctrines. Moreover, the conventional persona can easily be identified

with or separated from the poet. He usually has a single function which can be detected without much difficulty. The Chaucerian persona, however, is a multi-functional figure. He is, generally, a well-read practicing poet with a great deal of intellectual capacity. He listens in a "literal-minded" way; he sees and transcribes without comment, reads and describes without engaged response. Being non-committal, he raises questions leading to questions and thus urges the reader to develop his own conclusion. Moreover, the Chaucerian persona is sometimes treated humorously, is made the object of humorous remarks. As such he claims to be identical with Chaucer. However, it is difficult to generalize his characteristics since he assumes different roles in each poem, and since ambiguity is a peculiar characteristic of Chaucer's dreamer.

The persona in Chaucer's dream poems indirectly raises questions about the nature of poetry, love and life. In the Book of the Duchess, for instance, there is a tactful, considerably mature persona engaged in the paradox of life and death with particular respect to love. In the House of Fame, the persona questions the validity of fame and its relation to poetic creation. In the Parlement of Foules the persona is a means to comtemplate and criticize various kinds of love. The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women contains a subtle

satire directed at biased literary criticism as well as giving a fine lecture on the value of old books with respect to their role in bridging the gap between the old and new culture.

Chaucerian persona has always been problematic for the critics. However, although a few studies have been made on the dreamer,[19] none of them is conclusive and all-inclusive. It seems that a comprehensive study on Chaucer's dreamer in the dream poems will help the critical evaluation of the structure and the themes of Chaucer's poems. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to determine the functions and the nature of the persona in Chaucer's dream poems The Book of the Duchess, the House of Fame, The Parlement of Foules and The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women. It will be shown that Chaucerian persona differs from the conventional persona as a literal-minded, detached person with a peculiar amount of ambiguity and humour as regards his nature.It will also be demonstrated that Chaucer uses his persona to meditate on poetry, on life and love in general, and on various other issues of his time; that the persona is also used to criticize certain tendencies of people in the fourteenth century society as well as the poetic practices of that time.

Accordingly, following the chronological order in which the poems were written, in the first chapter

of this thesis the persona in the Book of the Duchess will be examined. In the second chapter the persona of the House of Fame will be discussed; in the third chapter the persona in the Parlement of Foules, and in the fourth chapter the persona in The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women will be discussed. The conclusion will contain the decisive argument.

NOTES

[1] See Ovid, Metamorphoses Vol II, XI, 592.

[2] See Homer, The Iliad, trans. Ennis Rees (New York: The Modern Library, 1963) II, xxiii.

[3] Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. W.H. Stahl (New York, 1952) The dream classification is on pp. 87. Quoted by A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976) 9.

[4] See Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Ennis Rees (New York: The Modern Library, 1960) XI.

[5] Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. C.D. Lewis (London: Hogarth, 1961) VI. Cf. Odyssey, Book XI.

[6] See Dante, The Divine Comedy, trans. C.E. Norton (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952) 1-52. Also see Chaucer, The House of Fame, 445-50.

[7] Odyseus travels to the underworld on his way back home after the Trojan War. Aeneid is in search of a country for his people and, among many other happenings he goes to the underworld as well.

[8] Macrobius, Commentary of the Dream of Scipio, 87-90. Quoted in Spearing, Medieval Dream Poetry, 10.

[9] Genesis 41: 1-7; Genesis 37: 5-9.

[10] The Second Letter to Corinthians 12: 1-4.

[11] In the Pearl, a mature man is instructed by his infant daughter who is superior to him because of her elevated status in the other world. The theological theme, therefore, is the salvation of the innocent and the equality of the saved souls in heaven.

[12] Bede, Ecclesiastical History V.12. Quoted by Spearing, Medieval Dream Poetry, 15.

[13] See Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, Book IV.

[14] Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, trans. Charles Danlberg (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971) 31.

[15] Bede, Ecclesiastical History Book IV, Chapter 24. Quoted in C.E. Carrington, J.H. Jakson, A History of England (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1954) 43-44.

[16] See Chaucer, The Book of the Duchess, 305-20; 332-34.

[17] For further information see W. Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, trans. C.A.M. Sym. (London: Methuen, 1963) 3; Dean S. Fansler, Chaucer and The Roman de la Rose (Glaucester: P. Smith, 1965).

[18] See Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and The French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1957); Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues ed. and trans. B. A. Windeatt (Wootbridge: Brewer, 1982).

[19] See Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, trans. S.J. Tester, Book II, 219-22 in Boethius: Tractates, De Consolatione Philosophie, trans, H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand, S.J. Tester (Cambridge: Harvard Univ.Press, 1973)

[20] E.T. Hansen, "Irony and the Antifeminist Narrator in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women" JEGP 82:1 (1983), 11-31; S.S. Hussey, Chaucer: An Introduction 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1981) 14-54.; M. David Bevington, "The Obtuse Narrator in Chaucer's House of Fame" Speculum 36 (1961) 288-98. Beryl Rowland, "Chaucer's Self Portrait in the Book of the Duchess". PQ 43 (1964) 27-39. There are a few more other separate studies on the dreamer, most of them dealing with the dreamer in a particular poem, or analysing only the nature of the dreamer.

CHAPTER I

THE DREAMER IN THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS

Chacuer's first dream poem The Book of the Duchess has long been recognized as an elegy written as a tribute to the memory of Blanche, Chaucer's patron John of Gaunt's wife. Chaucer composed his poem in 1369, the year in which Blanche died of plague, and meant it as a compliment to the mourning duke.[1]

It is generally accepted that Chaucer in his early poetical career was indebted to contemporary French literature. Indeed, The Book of the Duchess, which is the earliest of Chaucer's four dream poems, displays the influence of contemporary French love visions, especially of the poetry of Machaut, Froissart, Jean de Meun and of Guillaume de Lorris on the topical and structural material. However, most students of Chaucer have argued that in his choice of form and his treatment of the subject Chaucer is extensively original. Contrary to Sedgwick, who argues that Chaucer in The Book of the Duchess copies freely from Machaut, Froissart and Roman de la Rose[2] one tends to assert that Chaucer only borrows from these authors and makes the borrowed material his own. However, this does not rule out the fact that Chaucer is indebted to Roman de la Rose for his leading

conventions and for some other details, and that the dreamer's situation comes from Froissart's Le Paradys d'Amours. In this work, as in the Book of the Duchess, the dreamer is a woeful lover who cannot sleep because of his grief (Kittredge 1967:49). Besides these two sources, one other major source Chaucer uses is the Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne by Machaut, together with some other French love visions. Moreover, for the incident of Ceyx and Alcione Ovid's Metamorphoses is another source.[3]

It is a common view that although the material Chaucer used was thus derived from such popular and commonly known sources, he created a poem of originality. His originality and creativity are well displayed in his dreamer as well, who although seems to share the characteristics of the traditional dreamer, differs from his prototypes in many details, especially in his nature and his functions in the dream.

Chaucer's dreamer in the Book of the Duchess is versatile and extremely variable. Now he appears to be a naive and simple-minded person of many dream poems, now he turns into a learned, well-read omniscient figure. At his first appearance one wants to dismiss him as a mere device required by the type of the poem; yet, in fact, he is a significant literary figure. Indeed, he is multi-

functional. He is used by the poet for diverse purposes for each of which he assumes almost completely different personalities. Thus, when he performs his functions the ambiguity lingering about his nature becomes more detectable. For instance, in explaining the reason for the Black Knight's sorrow, he appears to be ignorant of human psychology; however, when the conversation turns on Fortune, he is able to instruct the Knight by offering Socrates' philosophy. Yet, there is enough evidence in the poem to suggest that he is obviously not simple-minded and short-witted to understand the real meaning of the Knight's state of mind. In fact, he is a tactful,humble person careful not to hurt the feelings of his interlocutor.

The dreamer is conceived as a probably unsuccessful lover who is sleepless and sorrowful. He states that he has been ill for eight years but does not explain the reason of his illness (36-40).[4] His words "For there is phisicien but oon" (39) suggest an unrequited love.

Depicting the dreamer as sleepless and sorrowful was a common practice fully fitted to the tradition of dream poetry. However, in the Book of the Duchess this is not a mere commonplace device; it is much more functional. In his encounter with the Knight the dreamer will speak of his appearance which is strikingly similar

to that of the dreamer. In the proem the dreamer,telling his long sleeplessness, says:

> And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde
> Hyt were to lyven in thys wyse;
> For nature wolde not suffyse
> To noon erthly creature
> Not longe tyme to endure
> Withoute slep and be in sorwe.
>
> (16-21)

Likewise, when he sees the Knight, he comments:

> Hit was gret wonder that Nature
> Myght suffre any creature
> To have such sorwe, and be not ded.
>
> (467-69)

Obviously, Chaucer has made his dreamer and the Knight suffer in the same way deliberately. If the dreamer experienced the same loss or pain, he would realize and understand the Knight's sorrow better. This bond built up between the Knight and the dreamer, furthermore, is a departure from the conventional depiction,which makes the dreamer more functional.[5]

Indeed, the dreamer's psychological "training" starts earlier, when he is made to read the story of Ceyx and Alcione, which provides also a thematic balance

between the proem and the main body. As stated by Mehl (1986:25) as well, in the story of Ceyx and Alcione the experience of death is introduced and the subject of grief is discussed more explicitly. The story, as summarized by the dreamer, runs as follows: Ceyx and Alcione are a happy couple. One day when Ceyx is on sea as usual, a storm breaks and everybody including Ceyx is drowned. Alcione anxiously waits for her husband's return,but she cannot hear from him and finally sends her men to search for the king. However, they cannot provide her with any news. Upon this she prays Juno to tell her what has become of her husband. After that she falls asleep and Ceyx appears to her to inform her that he is dead:

> .....My swete wyf,
> Awake! let be your sorwful lyf!
> For in your sorwe there lyth no red.
> Ye shul me never on lyve yse.
>
> (201-5)

Upon the sad news the queen:

> With that hir eyen up she casteth
> And saw noght. "Allas?" quod she for sorwe,
> And deyede within the thridde morwe.
>
> (221-23)

Thus having read and sympathized with the grief of Alcione, the dreamer is now aware of the counterpart of life which causes sorrow, and the only cure of this sorrow, although at this stage he does not appear to be concerned with this matter. Still, when he meets the Knight mourning the death of his lady, his initiation to death will give him an insight into the situation. Obviously, the dreamer is prepared for the conversation with the Knight from the very beginning of the poem.

Chaucer's dreamer is not only more developed, but also difficult to identify. Since in medieval literature it was a common practice for a poet to identify himself with one of the characters or to disguise himself under the image of a character, one may argue that the dreamer is Chaucer in disguise.[6] The great care and humility he displays when he speaks to the Knight support this view. However, the artlessness and stupidity or ignorance attributed to the dreamer certainly lends his depiction some ambiguity. Yet, it is certainly this ambiguity that makes the Chaucerian persona more colourful and interesting, and it is this characteristic of the dreamer that will be explained in this chapter.

Chaucer's dreamer is a "bookworm". His favourite passtime is stated as reading, especially reading in

classical literature (47-49). He is also a practicing poet. At the end of his dream, he announces that:

> Thoughte I, "Thys ys so queynt a sweven
> That I wol, be processe of tyme,
> Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
> As I kan best, and that anoon."
>
> (1330-33)

The fact that he is a well-read and learned poet fully versed in classics together with his knowledge of mythology, although he professes ignorance, urges us to conclude that he is Chaucer himself. Moreover, the dreamer prefers reading and learning to other activities. This characteristic, which the dreamer simply announces "For me thoughte it beter play/Then play either at chess or tables" (50-51), strikes us as a recurrent quality of Chaucer's dreamer in his other dream poems as well. At the same time, in these two lines, Chaucer's dreamer depicts himself as an ordinary man who does not know about, and does not participate in, the social life of the nobility. By so doing he gives us some clues to identify the dreamer with Chaucer.

The dreamer seems to be a simple-minded man at his first appearance. In his passive melancholy and sleeplessness he reaches for a book which proves to be the story of Ceyx and Alcione. Probably because of the

similarity of the sorrow of Alcione to that of his own, he immediately sympathizes with her. Furthermore,having been impressed by the remedy granted to Alcione,he simple-mindedly tries to bribe Juno, Morpheus or any other god that may give him some sleep. Here, the dreamer assumes to be disoriented in mythology:

> Whan I had red thys tale wel,
> And overloked hyt everydel,
> Me thoghte wonder yf hit were so;
> For I had never herd speke, or tho,
> Of noo goddes that koude make
> Men to slepe, ne for to wake;
>
> (231-36)

However, throughout his conversation with the knight he reveals a great knowledge of mythology and classical literature. Yet, some characteristics of the dreamer mislead some critics as to deny his extensive knowledge and describe him as naive. One of these characteristics is his sentimental attitude toward the characters he meets. When he reads the story of Ceyx and Alcione he states:

> Such sorowe this lady to her tok
> That trewely I which made this book,
> Had such pittee and such rowthe
> To rede hir sorwe, that, by my trowthe,
> I ferde the worse al the morwe
> Aftir, to thenken on hir sorwe.
>
> (94-100)

Similarly, when he beholds the Knight his heart is out for him, too. He wonders how the Knight can ever live with such a great grief. Besides, throughout his narrative the dreamer is mostly uncommitted, relating his story without much involvement except for his extensive sympathy. This lack of commitment and relatively escapist attitude of the dreamer are the standpoint for the argument that the dreamer is a purely imaginary figure and thus a part of fiction and nothing more.[7] Yet, this statement may be true only until his encounter with the Knight. Before the encounter the dreamer appears to understand almost nothing, even the meaning of his dream is incomprehensible to him. He can only tell us what happened and usually leaves the interpretation to the reader. Moreover, for the most part he never reasons, only feels and gets impressions. Indeed, all these qualities are deliberately chosen by Chaucer. With his peculiar love of ambiguity he never lets his dreamer state anything in the plain language. The reader has to draw his own conclusion. Additionally, if the dreamer is taken for Chaucer himself who is humbly trying to console his sorrowful patron, as stated by Mehl (1986:29), the lack of spirit of superiority in dreamer's words may suggest Chaucer's relationship to John of Gaunt, which requires careful utterance and to some extent humility. Therefore, it is very natural for the dreamer to appear as simple as possible, by means of which the dignity of the noble patron is preserved and the humble

employee is let to offer his help. Thus, it may be argued that the dreamer's naivety and uncommitment do not necessarily make him a completely fictive persona.

Like many other traditional dreamers, this dreamer also has a dream, in which he finds himself in a world of happiness and activity. Then he happens to join a hunt, and, led by a whelp, he meets a knight dressed in black. He listens to the lamenting Knight and understands that the knight is mourning due to the death of his wife. Upon this he decides to comfort the Knight and prepares to greet the Knight properly. If he were the stupefied, naive person as he appears to be so far, he would not feel the need to comfort the Knight and would start talking about the lady straight away. Instead, he tries to build a conversation, which points to the fact that he is by no means simple-minded or ignorant. On the contrary, he is Chaucer himself who eyes the Knight knowingly and decides to elicit his sorrow:

> Anoon ryght I gan fynde a tale
> To hym, to loke wher I myght ought
> Have more knowynge of hys thought.
>
> (536-38)

As the lines above designate, he already knows that the Knight is in mourning; however, as observed by

Traversi (1987:42), he prepares to have "more knowynge" of his sorrow and thus to draw out the intimate thoughts of his interlocutor. As pointed out by Whitman (1969: 232), "far from being stupid, the Dreamer is really the master of the situation, but he masks his superiority behind a front of simple-minded good humour." Accordingly, when the Knight explains his situation with the metaphor of chess playing, he pretends to misunderstand him:

> " Why so? syr, yis parde! quod y;
> " Ne say noght soo, for trewely,
> Thogh ye had lost the ferses twelve,
> And ye for sorwe mordred yourselve
> .....
> But there is no man alyve her
> Wolde for a fers make this woo!"
>
> (721-24; 739-40)

Similarly, when the Knight blames him for not realising his loss, he assumes simple-mindedness and replies:

> " Loo (sey) how that may be?" quod y;
> " Good sir, tell me al hooly
> In what wys, how, and wherfore
> That ye have thus youre blysse lore."
>
> (745-48)

It is not because of his stupidity as suggested by Spearing (1976:67) and Kittredge (1967:49), that the

dreamer makes the Knight speak more, but because he tries to console him. On this point Mehl argues as follows:

> The incredulous queries of the dreamer are not an expression of slow comprehension, but rather an indication that he's genuinely moved and only now begins to grasp the full extent of the Knight's grief.[8]

Mehl further argues that though the dreamer may have heard about the lady's death, it is only during his conversation that he can really feel what the Knight's loss may mean for him. Therefore, the dreamer's interrogation:

> " What los ys that?" quod I thoo;
> " Nyl she not love yow? ys hyt so?
> Or have you ought doon amys,
> That she hath left yow? ys hyt this?
> For Goddess love, tell me al.
>
> (1139-43)

serves as a carefully formulated set of questions to compel the Knight to speak more and thus, while reexperiencing his past happiness, accept his loss without excessive sorrow. Therefore, the dreamer's short interruption as:

> .....Now, by my troothe, sir" quod I,
> " He thynketh ye have such a chaunce
> As shryfte wythoute repentaunce."
>
> (1112-14)

or his plea for more information about the first steps of the Knight to win his lady's grace (1126-30), his direct question "Sir 'quod I, ' where is she now?'(1298) and his last question "Allas, sir, how? what may that be?" which makes the Knight utter consequently the disguised truth: "She ys ded! " (1309) are the steps of a carefully planned conversation. Therefore it may be suggested that the dreamer's attitude during the conversation with the Knight and his successful psychological approach make him identical with Chaucer. As stated above, apparently Chaucer the poet could not address his patron more directly and could not appear wiser than his patron; therefore, he chose to express his ideas through his naive dreamer, through whom his message is well conveyed.

The function of the dreamer in the poem is of great importance. As stated by Whitman (1969:237), he does not only give dramatic interest to the whole poem; in his development he is both the unifying principle and particularly the vehicle for all that is positively stated by Chaucer in the poem. The dreamer has been given the functions to console the duke, discuss the relationship

between life and death and describe Fortune as an influential principle in human life. All this discussion concerns an anticipated attitude both toward death and fickleness of Fortune.

Through his dreamer Chaucer obviously offers consolation to his patron. His aim in the consolation process is to achieve two things: one is to enable the duke to recollect and, thus reexperince his past happiness, to realize the fullfilment he enjoyed in his married life. The dreamer also tries to make the duke recognize his present loss, and do this without much grief. Moreover, while recollecting his past life, the duke also remembers his lady, her beauty and goodness, which provides for Chaucer to give the lady the due praise by presenting her as an ideal courtly love lady. Since the Book of the Duchess is a poem occassioned by the death of Lady Blanche, the dreamer in a sense is committed to commemorate her death. To do so, Chaucer makes his persona read a story of lovers separated by death; hence, he provides a suitable transition to his dream which is planned to be both convincing and functional as regards the consolation offered in it. Consequently, in the conversation with the Knight, the dreamer is given the role of a confessor. He knows that the Knight is in mourning because he has lost his lady. His aim, therefore,is to make the Knight to speak out his sorrow, which is a vital step to the

healing process to follow the whole confession. Hence, the dreamer offers his help:

> Me thynketh in gret sorowe I yow see
> But certes, sire, yif that yee
> Wolde ought discure me youre woo,
> I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo,
> Amende hyt, yif I kan or may
> Ye mowe preve hyt be assay;
> For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool,
> I wol do al my power hool.
>
> (547-54)

The Knight begins to talk about his great loss and argues that no one can heal his wound since his life has been ripped off its bliss by death. After his long hopeless utterance, the Knight decides to tell the dreamer the reason of his sorrow and then follows the conventional attack on Fortune. His first speech is about 150 lines long during which there is no interruption by the dreamer. As a confessor and consoler, he lets the Knight do more of the speaking. However, when the Knight ends his speech by saying "I have more sorowe than Tantale" (709), the dreamer is urged to give the first instruction and reminds the Knight the harms of too much sorrow:

" A, goode sir," quod I, "say not soo!"
Have some pitee on your nature
That formed yow to creature,"

(714-16)

The dreamer also offers the philosophy of Socrates as a remedy for unbearable grief (717-19). However, since the Knight has much more to say, the dreamer compels him to speak more by affecting misunderstanding. With intermittent interruptions by the dreamer the dialogue goes on and the Knight is led to tell his love story once more emphasizing his past happiness (Clemen 1963:44). Meanwhile, his mind is freed from the present. With the interference of the dreamer to carry on the conversation, the Knight talks about his love and praises his precious lady, too. Finally, the Knight utters the truth that his lady is dead, and the confession is completed. Through the dreamer's supervision the Knight comes to realise his present loss. He is also consoled about his excessive grief which is a sin invariably condemned by the Church .

The dreamer in the Book of the Duchess undertakes a quite different role by offering consolation to the Knight. Traditionally, the dreamer of the dream poems is a person lacking in a certain branch of knowledge and therefore is instructed by the figure he encounters in his dream. Chaucer's dreamer in the Book of the Duchess,

on the contrary, appears to be an able figure and instructs the Knight. As Mehl (1986:24) has rightly pointed out, the dreamer himself is not made the recipient of any specific instruction or consolation. With this different role too, he differs from the conventional dreamers. Yet, the dreamer gives his instruction with such great care and tact that many critics accuse him of not comprehending the Knight's situation. However, as rigthly stated by Clemen (1963: 49-50), each of the dreamer's questions and remarks during the conversation seeming to show his misunderstanding, reveals a deeper psychological wisdom.

By making the Knight accept the truth, the dreamer states that death is inevitable; it is a part of life and should be recognized. As Hussey has pointed out, what Chaucer implies is that "bereavement must be accepted and life must go on; " and that " long continuance of grief is unnatural."[9]

Accordingly, the dream ends with the Knight's words "She ys ded! ". The moment he pronounces these words there is nothing more to say both for the dreamer and for the Knight, because both finally agree on the fact that the only remedy is acceptance and submission. As noted above, through the story of the Black Knight Chaucer objectifies the situation[10] and indirectly states

that the reality of death should be recognized and the uselessness of pursuing grief beyond the natural limits should be admitted. This fact is taught the Knight by the dreamer himself.

Chaucer, in the Book of the Duchess, addresses himself to some philosophical subjects. One of these philosophical subjects is Fortune which is discussed at lenght by the dreamer. As usual, however, he does not state his direct feelings and opinion about the subject. In the discussion of Fortune, in fact, the mouthpiece of Chaucer is the Knight, not the dreamer, especially in displaying the unfavourable characteristics of Fortune. However, it is the dreamer who induces the Knight to speak about Fortune, and therefore discussion of Fortune is another object for which the dreamer is used.

In the part of the conversation concerning Fortune, the theme, as pointed out by Spearing(1976:50) and Friedman (1969:157) recalls Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy; the power of Fortune over human life and the attitude man should adopt towards it. Friedman (1969:160) argues that these two men the knight and the dreamer address themselves to a philosophic subject, the instability of worldly things. In one sense, the subject of their dialogue is Fortune and her fickleness, in another it is the remedium Fortunae as summed up by Boethius.

The Knight, very early in his speech, introduces Fortune as the source of his misery:

> My boldnesse ys turned to shame,
> For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game
> Atte ches with me, allas the while!
> The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,
>
> (617-20)

His speech goes on stressing the falseness of Fortune. The Knight's depiction of Fortune follows the Boethian portrait in the Consolation of Philosophy. A few lines later the Knight states that Fortune's

> ....moste worshippe and hir flour ys
> To lyen, for that ys hyr nature
> Withoute feyth, lowe, or mesure
> She ys fals, and ever laughynge
> With oon eye, and that other wepynge
> That ys broght up, she set al doun,
>
> (630-35)

One characteristic of Fortune is to tell lies, and she is notorious for her double nature, one side of which glorifies and the other deprives suddenly one of his happiness. These are again characteristics assigned to Fortune by Boethius. Fortune's nature also defines the meaning of life. As long as Fortune exists and has power on human life, man will experience both happiness and

misery. Ironically, the Knight,who talks about Fortune, does not seem to be well aware of what she is capable of. Otherwise, he would not be blaming Fortune for his loss; instead, he would accept the reversal as naturally as he has enjoyed the bliss. However, some lines later,he shows some signs of realization, for he says:

> And eke she ys the lasse to blame;
> Myself I wolde have do the same,
> Before God, hadde I ben as she;
> She oghte the more excused be.
>
> (675-78)

The metaphor of chess playing points to man's inevitable subjection to the turns of Fortune. Apparently, Fortune can not be challenged. This is well exemplified in the Knight's misery, who, after having experienced extreme happiness with his lady, is now being exposed to extreme grief merely because of a whim of Fortune.

The conversation on Fortune enables the dreamer to offer his first consolation. As argued by Friedman (1969:160), the dreamer urges the Knight to look at his problem philosophically.To do this, the dreamer introduces the philosophy of Socrates:

Remembre yow of Socrates,
For he ne counted nat thre strees
Of noght that Fortune koude doo,"

(717-19)

and adds also some examples of women who died of sorrow (725-34). Thus, the first effort for a remedy comes out of their conversation with a reference to stoic philosophy. Hence, we may argue that this speech on Fortune serves as a step of the consolation offered by the dreamer and also a step of the confession made by the Knight under the careful guidance of the dreamer. His situation is Fortune's doing,but the Knight will not admit it calmly unless he tells the whole story of his love and loss.

Yet, Chaucer has more to say on Fortune. By introducing Socrates' philosophy he is, in fact,implicitly warning and guiding all people against Fortune.He advises that one should guide oneself against the unexpected turns of Fortune. This, he suggests, can be achieved with the help of philosophy.

In conclusion, we can say that the main concern of the Book of the Duchess is the sorrow caused by the death of Lady Blanche. Chaucer, through his dreamer,tries to console John of Gaunt by representing his happiness and his loss in a similar context. Meanwhile, he also

tries to counsel him against immoderate grief-a sin condemned by religion and scorned by philosophers. Although there is not a complete cure either for the duke or the other people, the poem offers hope that they will become reconciled with life as a result of the philosophic understanding and human sympathy that are built by the conversation between the Knight and the dreamer.

Using the story of the Knight, Chaucer, moreover, discusses death, and its relation to life, Fortune and her influence upon man's life. However, Chaucer in the Book of the Duchess does not give us any definite instruction. On this matter Phillips argues as follows:

> The absence of a dream guide or of any commentary or conclusion, together with Chaucer's use of a narrator who in understanding, or at least in explicit comment, falls short of the meaning of what he sees, leaves the reader unusually dependent on the non-rational guides of eye and ear.[11]

However, as Bronson says:

> The elements of work come together and are fused at a level of experience,

> human and artistic, where likeness melts into a closer unity, and where, in the presence of death, Ceyx and Blanche, Gaunt and Alycone, the Dreamer and Chaucer and his audience, too, of which we now form a part, are become essentially one.[12]

In conclusion it may be argued that Chaucer's wise and tactful dreamer in the Book of the Duchess reads the words of Ceyx for all of us:

> Awake! let be your sorwful lyf!
> For in your sorwe there lyth no red.
> For, certes, swete, I nam but ded;
> Ye shul me never on lyve yse...
> And farewel, swete, my worldes blysse!
> I praye God your sorwe lysse.
> To lytel while our blysse lasteth!'
>
> (202-5; 209-11)

This is the remedy and consolation offered to cure the sorrow caused by death; this is what the dreamer or Chaucer indirectly tells the Knight or John of Gaunt.

NOTES

[1] Recent criticism now agrees on the occasional nature of the poem.

[2] Henry D. Sedgwick, Dan Chaucer: An Introduction to the poet, his poetry and his times (New York: AMS Press, 1971) 71.

[3] See Robinson's introduction to The Book of the Duchess in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957) 266-67.

[4] For quotation and textual reference Robinson's edition of The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer has been used throughout the thesis.

[5] Cf. the dreamer in the Pearl.

[6] For instance, in the Piers the Plowman the dreamer and Langland are identical in some parts.

[7] Among the critics who held this view is primarily Kittredge. Also S.S. Hussey, Chaucer: An Introduction (London: Methuen, 1981) 31,argues that the dreamer is a simple-minded man. A.C. Spearing shares this view, too. Medieval Dream Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976) 67.

[8] Dieter Mehl, Geoffrey Chaucer: An Introduction to His Narrative Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986) 31.

[9] S.S. Hussey, Chaucer: An Introduction 35.

[10] Derek Traversi in Chaucer: The Earlier Poetry: A Study in Poetic Development (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1987) 33, indicates with regard to the themes in the Book of the Duchess that something of more than individual implication is being worked out, i.e.the seemingly individual matters have been made important universal issues.

[11] Helen Phillips, "Structure and Consolation in the Book of the Duchess." ChauR 16:2 (1981) 108.

[12] Bertrand H. Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-opened" in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism ed. Edward Wagenknecht (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965) 294.

CHAPTER II

THE DREAMER IN THE HOUSE OF FAME

The House of Fame, which is thought to have been written after Troilus and Criseyde (1385), is Chaucer's second dream poem. The date of composition is still not certain; however, Chaucer's reference to his daily "reckonings" in the poem fixes the time of composition between 1374 and 1385, when Chaucer was working as Controller of Customs.[1]

The poem has been regarded as of experimental character.[2] It carries many qualities of a love vision. It obviously owes a great deal to Froissart's Paradys d' Amours and Temple d'Onnor as well as Nicole de Margival's Panthere d'Amours.[3] Yet, as usual with Chaucer, this poem has not been traced to any definite source or model,either. On the contrary, here the dream convention is treated with considerable freedom and made the vehicle of ideas quite distinct from the usual dream poems. Not only does Chaucer include a summary of the Aeneid, but he also draws upon the Somnium Scipionis, medieval Latin poets, historians, commentators and grammarians. Furthermore, he relies so much on Dante that the poem has been regarded by some critics an an imitation of the Divine Comedy.[4]

As stated by Clemen (1963:3), the poem as a whole gives a lively impression of the intellectual interests of Chaucer and his contemporaries. Indeed,what Chaucer did in the House of Fame is to unite all stylistic and formal elements currently in use in contemporary poetry to produce a poem of his own. As can be observed in the House of Fame,he sets free much of what he borrows from the past by turning it into new uses. He disregards the previous functions of certain themes, and gives them a new connotation to produce an ironic contrast between their former implications and what they imply and signify now.

The subtle play with the themes and form is also discernable in his dreamer. Chaucer makes the poetic "I" very much his own. In view of the eagle's address to the dreamer as "Geffrey", it has been suggested that he is Chaucer himself.[5] Moreover, there is a reference to the dreamer's daily reckonings, which has been suggested to refer to Chaucer's daily work when he worked as the Controller of the Customs. This, therefore, is considered a conclusive detail to identify the dreamer with Chaucer. Contrarily, some critics (Miller 1982:101) have argued that the dreamer in the House of Fame cannot in fact be identified with Chaucer, nor is he a completely fictive persona. The overt references stated above indicate a connection between the dreamer and the poet Chaucer; yet

the dreamer is sometimes very frightened, hysterical and stupefied. In other words, as Miller suggests, he is too naive and simple to convince us that he is unquestionably Chaucer.

The dreamer of the House of Fame is conceived as a love poet constant in the service of the God of Love. He is inexperienced in love, leading a life of a hermit and too much occupied with his books, These details are given by the lecturing eagle of the second book, which contemptuously tells the dreamer the reason of his journey. Significantly these are the personal traits attributed to the dreamer in the Book of the Duchess as well. Yet, in the Book of the Duchess, the dreamer talks for himself and plainly tells us almost everything about himself. However, the dreamer of the House of Fame deliberately avoids explicitly identifying himself. Therefore, it is the eagle that states:

> That thou so longe trewely
> Hast served so ententyfly
> Hys blynde nevew Cupido,
> And faire Venus also,
> Withoute guerdon ever yit,
> And never-the-lesse has set thy wit-
> Although that in thy hed ful lyte is-
> To make bookys, songes, dytees,
> In ryme, or elles in cadence,
>
> (615-22)

that Jupiter considered this and many other things:

> That is, that thou hast no tydynges
> Of Loves folk yf they be glade,
> Ne of noght elles that God made,
> And noght oonly fro fer contree
> That ther no tydynge cometh to thee,
>
> (644-48)

Apparently, the dreamer in the House of Fame is a learned, well-informed poet who has already demonstrated his poetical gifts through the variety of his poetical work. However, throughout the poem, the dreamer is presented as naive and simple-minded, lacking proper knowledge. Again, we learn from the eagle that when his

> Labour doon al ys
> And hast made thy rekenynges,
> In stede of reste and newe thynges,
>
> (652-54)

the dreamer goes directly home where he reads "domb as any stoon" (656) and lives thus" as an heremyte"(659). The daily routines of the dreamer are most likely those of Chaucer.[6] The dreamer's excessive interest in books and his lack of experience (995) are also characteristics of the dreamer in the Book of the Duchess, and this also might be one of the rare direct references to Chaucer's personality.

Like the dreamer of the Book of the Duchess, the dreamer in the House of Fame is also versatile. Moreover, he is treated humorously and ironically. In the proem, he pretends to be unable to deal with the theories of dreams; yet he brings forth the whole knowledge of Chaucer on this matter. After his pious wish that "God turne us every drem to goode!" (1), he states that he cannot comprehend the distinction between the dreams, for, he says

> .....I certeinly
> Ne kan hem noght, ne never thinke
> To besily me wyt to swinke,
> To knowe of hir signifiaunce
> The gendres, neyther the distaunce
> Of tymes of hem, ne the causes...
>
> (14-19)

and refers the reader to "grete clerkys,/That trete of this and other werkes" (53-54).

However, although he seems to pass over this matter quickly, the dreamer in fact gives a good summary of the theories about dreams. Ironically, he does not seem to be impressed by any of these theories. This may be to parody the conventional dreamer's confidence with regard to the dreams.[7]

As opposed to the somewhat uncommitted attitude of the dreamer in the proem, in the Dido story we have a busy commentator of the story, while openly taking sides and giving views, suggesting how it may be applied. Indeed, at the beginning, the dreamer tries to give a short summary of the Dido story; he is definitely anxious to cut it short:

> And eke to telle the manere
> How they aqueynteden in fere,
> Hyt were a long proces to telle,
> And ever-long for yow to dwelle.
>
> (249-52)

Nevertheless, as the story continues the dreamer abondons his role of an objective story-teller and seems to be ready to defence his story. This is an interesting development and is contrary to the narrator's usual pose throughout the story. Chaucer's dreamer is almost always impartial and uncommitted. Yet, as Clemen (1963:80) notes, there is an ironic contrast here. At the beginning the dreamer is naive about what he recounts, and now he is eager to comment on what he relates; he cautions the reader and tries to use this episode for the enlightenment of his public. Upon Aeneas' desertion of Dido,he comments:

> Loo, how a woman doth amys
> To love him that unknown ys!
> For be Chryste, lo, thus yt fareth:
> " Hyt is not al gold that glareth."
>
> (269-72)

The dreamer's zeal to teach his reader reveals itself also in his words:

> And Dido, and hir nyce lest,
> That loved al to sone a gest;
> Therfore I wol seye a proverbe,
> That "he that fully knoweth th'erbe
> May saufly leye hyt to his ye";
> Withoute drede, this ys no lye.
>
> (287-92)

Hence, as opposed to the almost entirely impartial dreamer of the Book of the Duchess, who, in the story preceding the dream proper expresses only his sympathy with the lovers separated by death, the dreamer of the House of Fame claims authorship of the story he attempts to summarize. In the line which reads "Non other auctor alegge I " (314), he declares himself as the only authority. However, some lines later, he again refers the reader to "Rede Virgile in Aneydos/Or the epistle of Ovyde" (378-79) to hear the rest of Dido's story. This moralizing, almost didactic dreamer suggests that the dreamer cannot be Chaucer who always avoids direct

statements. On the other hand, he is definitely very remote from the traditional dreamer. He does sympathize with the characters of the story depicted on the walls of the temple of Venus. With his common comments such as "And aftir this was grave, allas! "(157) or "That hyt was pitee for to here," (180), he is very close to the dreamer in the Book of the Duchess.

Yet, the dreamer in the eagle's talons creates a completely different image. The talkative commentator of the Dido episode seems to be replaced by a man stupefied by what he sees and hears. If the dreamer is to be considered Chaucer in this episode, what is presented is a very humorous self mocking. The eagle definitely prevails upon him:

> "Awak! And be not agast so for shame!
> .....
> I wol the telle what I am
> And whider tho shalt, and why I cam
> To do thys, so that thou take
> Good herte, and not for fere quake"
>
> (554-55; 601-4)

It is seen here that the dreamer is in a ludicrous situation: very scared and unable to move. Chaucer's self mocking is furthered in the eagle's comment:

> Thou art noyous to carye,
> And nothyng nedeth it, pardee!
>
> (574-75)

as well as in its first long speech:

> And never-the-lesse hast set thy wit-
> Although that in thy hed ful lyte is-
> To make bookys,songes, dytees,
> In ryme, or elles in cadence
> As thou best canst. in reverence
> Of Love, and of hys servantes eke.
>
> (620-25)

Despite his inability to grasp things fully and also in view of his lack of production, the dreamer has been a faithful servant of Love, although, as the eagle points out, he "maist go in the daunce/Of hem that hym lyst not avunce." (639-40).

The comic image of the dreamer "domb as any stoon" sitting with a headache in his study and learning everything from books and nothing from life, together with the ironical comment "Although thy abstynence ys lyte" (660), is most probably a humorous self portrait of Chaucer.

In the House of Fame everthing is subject to ironic evaluation. From the proem onwards, in which

Chaucer talks about the theory of the dreams, the ironic dimension of the whole poem becomes more and more significant. Like the French writers who often prefaced their dream poems with a serious discussion of the theories to prove that dreams were worthy of belief,[8] Chaucer, through the mouth of his dreamer, also gives us a profusion of varied theories of dreams. Moreover, he does not firmly assert them, he merely puts them before us as possibilities and he himself remains completely impartial (1-52). Thus, at the very beginning, the dreamer leads us to a concept of dream about which we have to make our personal decision. By standing apart from the argument of the opening lines, the dreamer compels the reader to see the irony in the whole passage: He pretends that all these theories and discussions of them are beyond his capacity, and still he presents a comprehensive argument on the nature of dreams. The pronounced ignorance and astonishment of the dreamer is, obviously, the affected ignorance and astonishment of the poet Chaucer, for his reference to "grete clerks/ That trete of this and other werkes" (53-54) is in fact a demonstration of his comprehensive knowledge on the subject.

The same irony prevails in the dreamer's invocation. His announcement that:

> But at my gynnynge, trusteth wel,
> I wol make invocacion,
> With special devocion,
> Unto the god of slep anoon,
> That duelleth in a cave of stoon[9]
>
> (66-70)

has its humorous remarks and ironical side. Instead of a direct invocation, the dreamer announces his intention and then introduces an amusing picture of Morpheus (70-76).[10] Moreover, the invocation calls for God's curse on those who do not esteem the validity of his dream:

> And whoso thorgh presumpcion,
> Or hate, or skorn, or thorgh envye,
> Dispit, or jape, or vilanye,
> Mysdeme hyt, pray I Jesus God
> That (dreme he barefot, dreme he shod),
> That every harm that any man
> Hath had, syth the world began,
> Befalle hym therof, or he sterve,
>
> (94-101)

This elaborate defence and exaggerated suspicion obviously serve ironic purposes. Chaucer must be furthering his self depreciation by suggesting that his dream may be misinterpreted, and may not be appreciated merely because of envy, hatred or scorn. In the invocation, moreover, the busy commentator is contrasted with the disinterested

dreamer of the proem; thus making it all the more difficult to detect definite personal traits of the dreamer.

It may be noted that the dreamer in the House of Fame is not able to sustain the mood of his story properly. His narration in the Dido episode obviously lacks unity and literal propriety. He frequently yields to the tendency to digress, and, instead of continuing the story of Aeneas and Dido, he comments on the pictures on the walls and gives the moral of the situation(265-81) and (286-92), or discusses a number of faithless couples who, like Aeneas, have deserted their partners. The absence of literary propriety and continuity of the mood is definitely, as argued by Jordan (1983:110) too, to parody the writer's dilemma anxiously confronting "his raw experience, his stubborn medium, his blank page and his hoped-for audience."[11] The lack of unity in the dreamer's narration may also point to a reaction to the traditional from of fiction. Moreover, it is seen that prolixity is a major problem of the dreamer. His readiness to cut the story short is often contrasted with his performance. In the House of Fame, he is occupied with the description of the house for a while; however, he suddenly realizes that:

> But hit were al to longe to rede
> The names; and therfore I pace
>
> (1354-55)

Still, the reader is given an elaborate description of Fame's dwelling and her dwellers. Hence, his prolixity as well is a means to highlight and parody the writer's struggle to control his material.

Moreover, in the Dido story, the dreamer comments on the love and relationship between the sexes and on their different roles in bringing the love experience to stand for their reputation. Thus, Fame, which is discussed at lenght in the third book, is introduced as rumour in Dido's lament upon Aeneas' leaving:

> O, wel-away that I was born!
> For thorgh yow is my name lorn
> And elle myn actes red and songe
> Over al thys land, on every tonge,
> O wikke Fame! for ther nys
> Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!
> O, soth ys, every thing ys wyst,
> Though hit be kevered with the myst.
>
> (435-52)

The dreamer furthermore appears to be pedantic in this episode since he claims full authorship over the story he relates and tends to moralize in his numerous

digressions (251-52, 265-66 and 273-81), and as such he is definitely a counterpart of the zealous eagle of the second book. In the second book, where instruction is given in a considerably entertaining and amusing tone, the dreamer is put to more uses. In the eagle's speech aiming at the instruction of the naive dreamer about the constitution of the universe and the physics of sound, Chaucer achieves one thing surely: He parodies the eagle's zeal to instruct and thus medieval didacticism as well on the score of prolixity and exaggerated self importance. The eagle makes use of medieval method of logic, priding himself on his "conclusions", "skilles" and "sentences" and basing his assertions on the authority of the classical writers "Aristotle and daun Platon / And other clekys many oon" (759).[12] Chaucer's parody of this self-reliant instructor is obvious in lines:

> And whoso seyth of trouthe I varye,
> Bid hym proven the contrarye
> .....
> This mayst thou fele, wel I preve.
>
> (807-808; 826)

Also, the words of eagle:

> Tell me this now feytfully,
> Have y not preved thus symply,
> Withoute any subtilite

Of speche, or gret prolixite
Of termes of philosophie,
Of figures of poetrie,
Of colours of rethorike?

(853-59)

seeking for the approval of the dreamer are ironic, for the eagle uses all that he denies to have used.

Chaucer seems to be ironical about the methods of proof used by the eagle as well. The eagle unites two contrary methods of proof in his speech; first he tries to prove how Fame "shulde here al this" by the method of logic:

" O yis, yis! "
Quod he to me, "that kan I preve
Be reson wortny for to leve,
So that thou yeve thyn advertence
To understonde my sentence.

(706-10)

He carries on his argument following the rules of "problemata dialogues" step by step.[13] However, when he comes to explain how "speche, or noyse, or soun" reaches the House of Fame, he prefers empirical method:

I preve hyt thus-take hede now-
Be experience; for yf that thow

> Throwe on water now a stoon,
> Wel wost thou, hyt wol make anoon
> A litel roundell as a sercle
>
> (787-91)

and states that:

> And ryght thus every word, ywys,
> That lowd or pryvee spoken ys
> Moveth first an ayr aboute,
> And of thys movynge, out of doute,
> Another ayr anoon ys meved,
> As I have of the watir preved,
> That every cercle causeth other
> Ryght so of ayr, my leve brother,
>
> (809-16)

Through the conversation of the eagle and the dreamer Chaucer thus discusses the physics of sound whereby we also have an insight into the medieval notion of the sciences. The eagle explains that:

> "Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken,
> And every speche that ys spoken
> Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,
> In his substaunce ys but air;
> For as flaumbe ys but lghted smoke,
> Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke.
>
> (765-70)

The heavenward flight has some other purposes as well. The dreamer in the second book appears to be a decent, respectful person somewhat perlexed yet honoured by the reward of Jupiter. His replies, his comments are considerably short, as if he speaks merely to indicate that he is following the eagle's argument. Indeed, as stated by Traversi (1987:65) as well, the dreamer throughout the journey is mostly uncommitted and submissive. He is certainly not much responsive to the enquiries and lecture of the eagle. He even declines the eagle's offer for more information about the stars (992-95). Thus, unlike the conventional dreamer who asks successive questions to make the guide give his instruction naturally, the dreamer of the House of Fame remains silent. Therefore, it may be suggested that this is a deliberate reversal of the rôle of the dreamer by Chaucer to parody the mode of instruction employed in the traditional dream poems.

Chaucer uses his dreamer to discuss Fame as an influential power in man's life. It is a known fact that in Latin fama which means fame has two meanings: fame and rumour. However, Chaucer uses fame in an ambivalent sense; it versus fame as well as rumour. As pointed out by Speirs (1967: 42), Fame is not more substantial than air; it is presented in the House of Fame merely as the conflicting wind, noise and vanity. This characteristic of Fame is stressed first in the eagle's discussion of the sound:

" Now hennesforth y wol the teche
How every speche, or noyse, or soun
Thurgh hys multiplicacioun,
Thogh hyt were piped of a mous,
Mot nede come to Fames Hous.

(782-86)

It is also through the eagle's speech that the abode of Fame and the way news gathers there is described. The eagle states that Fame dwells:

Ryght even in myddes of the weye
Betwixen hevene, erthe, and see;
That what so ever in al these three
Is spoken, either privy or apert,
The way therto ys so overt,
And stant eke in so juste a place
That every soun mot to hyt pace,
Or what so cometh from "any tonge",
Be hyt rouned, red, or songe
Or spoke in suerte or in drede,
Certeyn, hyt moste thider nede.

(714-20)

Fame's value is represented in the house presented on a high rock (1116). Significantly, the dreamer finds out that this rock on which the House of Fame is founded is a rock of ice and not "of Stel". The simple comment of the dreamer that "This were a feble fundament / To bilden on a place hye." (1132-33) is, in fact, pointing

to the argument put forward in the third book: that Fame is never a reliable guide to truth, it does not last long and obviously is vulnerable to blatant talk. Moreover, the walls of the house, the dreamer relates, "..... shoone ful lyghter than a glass" and "made wel more than hit was / To semen every thing..." (1289 -91). These casual remarks of the dreamer as well complete the picture of Fame embodying both truth and false and amplifying both, either justifiably or not.

Obviously Fame's value is considerably high and its influence pervasive. In the House of Fame says the dreamer, "herde I crien alle / God save...our oune gentil lady Fame" (1310,11,13). Fame is depicted, after the fashion in which Fortune has been portrayed, as a feminine creature, whose shifting nature and temporal appearance are introduced in the dreamer's words:

> A femynyne creature,
> That never formed by Nature
> Nas such another thing yseye,
> For alther-first, soth for to seye,
> Me thoughte that she was so lyte
> That the lenght of a cubite
> Was lengere than she seemed be.
> But thus sone, in a whyle, she
> Hir tho so wonderliche streighte
> That with her fet she erthe reighte
> And with hir hed she touched hevene.
>
> (1365-75)

This description points clearly to the relativity of fame; its high and low place in society changing frequently from one beholder to the other. Moreover, Fame is emblematically presented as whimsical and capricious to signify the precariousness of human fame. In this respect, her distribution of fame is random and to the dreamer incomprehensible:

> And somme of hem she graunted sone,
> And somme she werned wel and faire,
> And somme she graunted the contraire
> Of her axyng outterly,
> But thus I seye yow, trewely,
> What her cause was, y nyste
> For of this folk ful wel y wiste,
> They hadde good fame ech deserved
> Although they were dyversly served;
> Ryght as her suster, dame Fortune,
> Ys wont to serven in comune.
>
> (1538-48)

As argued by Delany (1972:87), the climax of the dreamer's journey to Fame's Palace appears to be the judgment scene in which Lady Fame distributes good reputation, bad reputation and anonymity to nine groups of petitioners. The first three groups deserve good fame and request it. However, the first group is denied their request and, instead, is granted anonymity. The second group is given bad reputation, which is the reverse of

what they request, and the third group is granted what they petition. Moreover, when the petitioners inquire from Lady Fame why they have received such a treatment, her reply is clear and short: "For me lyst hyt noght." (1564).

The fourth and fifth companies have done good works, but having acted only "for Goddys love" they wish to be forgotten. That wish is again granted to the former group, but denied to the latter. Although the sixth and seventh companies fully deserve anonymity, their members having lived idly all their lives and done "neither that nor this" (1732) both ask for good fame. This again is granted to one group and denied to the other. The eighth set of petitioners request good fame despite their admission of "the grettest wikidnesse/ That any herte kouthe gesse" (1813-14). Fame declines their request for:

> Al be ther in me no justice,
> Me lyste not to do hyt now,
> Ne this nyl I graunte yow...
>
> (1820-22)

which once more displays the notorious inconstancy and instability of Fame.

Only in the ninth and the last group there is a just correlation between desire, merit and reward. The members

of the ninth group have delighted in evil, and they ask to be remembered as they were. Accordingly, they are granted ill fame. The purpose of this scene is obvious: through it Chaucer restates the point that has already been explained in other ways: that tradition or fame is subject to diverse interpretations and as such cannot be a reliable agent to transfer the truth. Throughout the judgment scene, the poet is present both as narrator and witness. He wonders at Fame's capricious behaviour and expresses his sympathy for those who are unjustly served, meanwhile taking no part in the action.[14]

Obviously, for Chaucer, Fame, as an object of inspiration, is not something splendid. He repeatedly stresses that the poets in the House of Fame are not there by virtue of their own renown, but because they serve Fame by handing on and keeping alive the record of Fame, the remembrance of important figures and episodes. Accordingly, the dreamer relates:

> Though saugh I stonde on a piler,
> .....
> The Latyn poete, Virgile,
> That bore hath up a longe while
> The fame of pius Eneas
>
> (1481-85)

and:

Daun Claudian, the sothe to telle,
That bar up al the fame of helle,
Of Pluto, and of Proserpyne

(1509-11)

Likewise, he sees:

The grete poet, daun Lucan,
And on hys shuldres bar up than,
As high as that y myghte see
The fame of Julius and Pompe.

(1499-1502)

which defines the poet as a historian who records great events and deeds of famous men.

Chaucer himself renounces that fame which the whole preceding portrayal proves vain and fortuitous. When the dreamer is asked by a bystander "Artow come hider to han fame?" (1872), he hastily replies:

I cam noght hyder, graunt mercy,
For no such cause, by my hed.
Sufficeth me, as I were ded,
That no wight have my name in honde.
I wot myself best how I stond;
For what I drye, or what I thynke,
I will myselven al hyt drynke,

Certeyn, for the more part,
As fer forth as kan myn art.

(1874-82)

As noted by Clemen (1963:109), the poet's sharp reply that "I wot myself best how I stond" is probably the most personal statement in the poem exhibiting Chaucer's poetic modesty. It points to a natural self-reliance Chaucer has, contrary to personal ambition and self-glorification.

The dreamer's next visit is to the House of Rumours, which is in fact the visual allegory of the second meaning of fame, which is rumour. It is in this House that he hopes:

Somme newe tyndynges for to lere,
Somme newe thinges, y not what,
Tydynges other this or that
Of love, of such thynges glade.

(1886-89)

Since what he has witnessed in the House of Fame has not been "such tydynges" (1894). The description of the House of Rumours suggests a connection with the House of Fame. Moreover, this house which emblematically represents the mercy of rumour, "hath of entrees"

As feleas of leves ben in trees
In somer, when they grene been
And of the roof men may yet seen
A thousand holes, and wel moo,
To leten wel the soun out goo.

(1945-50)

The emblematic representation of rumour is further emphasized through the dreamer's words:

And be day, in every tyde,
Been al the dores opened wide,
And by nyght, echon, unshette;
No porter ther is noon to lette
No maner tydynges in to pace
Ne never rest is in that place

(1950-56)

The House of Rumours is always filled with the news

Of weres, of pes, of mariages,
Of reste, of labour, of viages,
Of abood, of deeth, of lyf,
Of love, of hate, acord, of stryf
Of loos, of lore, and of wynnynges

(1961-65)

All this news is first conveyed as a mere rumour:

Whan oon herd a thing, ywis
He com forth ryght to another wight,
And gan him tellen anon-rygth
The same that to him was told,
Or hyt a forlong way was old,
But gan somwhat for to eche
To this tydynge in his speche
More than hit ever was.

(2060-67)

The dreamer, moreover, states that the news sent out of the House of Rumours is a blend of "fals and soth". Furthermore, the news of the House of Rumours reaches the House of Fame, (2110-120). As pointed out by many critics, Fame, in the House of Fame is presented both as glory or ill-repute and as rumour, which are emblematically depicted through the Houses of Fame and Rumours respectively.

The dreamer's final observations in the House of Rumours serve as a subtle satire on those segments of society, which tend to pass the rumours of gossips they claim they have heard abroad; hence, the House

Was ful of shipmen and pilrimes
With scrippes bret-ful of lesinges,
Entremedled with tydynges,
And eek allone be hemselve,

(2122-126)

To these groups he also adds

> Pardoners,
> Currours, and eke messages
> With boystes crammed ful of lyes
> And ever vessel was with lyes.
>
> (2127-30)

The dreamer would have continued if the poet had not left his poem unfinished. However, in the dreamer Chaucer portrays himself and expresses his personal views. Through him he dwells on various issues of his time; sometimes disengaged, sometimes interested, he presents a critical and satirical interpretation of his time as regards fame, love, poetry and science.

NOTES

[1] See Robinson's introduction to the House of Fame in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 280-81.

[2] See P.S.J. Tatlock, The Mind and Art of Chaucer (New York: Gordian press, Inc, 1966) 56. See also Robinson's introduction in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer 280.

[3] See B.A. Windeatt, 127-133.

[4] See Tatlock, The Mind and Art of Chaucer 56, and John Speirs, Chaucer the Maker (London: Faber, 1964) 42. Also Robinson, 280.

[5] See Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning 110. Also in his "The Writing on the Wall: Authority and Authorship in Chaucer's House of Fame." Chaur (1982) 17:2, 101, T.J. Miller argues that the narrator in the House of Fame is not Chaucer, but nor is he the terribly naive persona of the Book of the Duchess. I do not completely agree with his view of the dreamer in the BD. However, his view of the dreamer in the HF is certainly valuable to introduce one characteristic of the dreamer.

[6] See Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and French Tradition, 110.

[7] In the Romance of the Rose, the dreamer assures the reader that the dreams tell the truth. See Romance of the Rose, 31.

[8] See Romance of the Rose, 31, see also Margival's Panthere d'Amours 41-6.

[9] The invocation points to the dreamer's knowledge of classical mythology and builds upon his picture as a well-read person. In this passage, Chaucer also draws upon classical authors Ovid and Boccacio. However, the picture he presents is quite unlike the picture of Morpheus in his sources. So, the tendency to experiment with the material is obvious here, too.

[10] For the irony in the invocations, see Wolfgang Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, 75-77.

[11] M. Robert Jordan, "Lost in the Funhouse of Fame: Chaucer and Postmodernism." ChauR (1983) 18:2,110

[12] Clemen, 100.

[13] Clemen explains the "problemata dialogues" as dialogues which open with the question to be discussed and proceed with a series of logical conclusions leading to the final clarification of the question. In the House of Fame, the eagle poses the question. Chaucer's Early Poetry, 100.

[14] It has been argued that the main theme of the House of Fame is poetry and the poet's relation to poetic creation. The argument states that the purpose of the dreamer's journey is to collect material (which is true) and have experience for the development of the poet. Therefore, the dreamer in the judgment scene serves as both an impartial poet gathering material for his books, and as witness. See M.R. Jordan, Chaucer's Poetics and the Modern Reader (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987) 33; "Lost in the Funhouse of Fame: Chaucer and Postmodernism." 100, 106. See also Derek Traversi, Chaucer the Earlier Poetry: A Study in Poetic Development, 54.

CHAPTER III

THE DREAMER IN THE PARLEMENT OF FOULES

Chaucer's third dream poem The Parlement of Foules has always been a popular subject of controversy among the Chaucerians. Among various interpretations of the poem is also included its significance as a historical allegory.[1]

The poem obviously owes a great deal to Macrobius' Dream of Scipio, Alain de Lille's Complaint of Nature and Boccacio's Teseida as well as some other works.[2] Chaucer also draws upon Jean de Conde's La Messe des Oisiaus. However, as Robinson (1967:309) has maintained, The Parlement of Foules has no definite source or model; indeed, it embodies various elements and material borrowed from all these sources.[3]

The dreamer in The Parlement of Foules is very much like the dreamer in the two previous poems. He is considerably detached, uncommitted and certainly not willing to promote any view. This is implied by his inexperience in love and his reliance on the authority of books. The theme is also similar to the themes of the previous dreams: it is obviously love. However, as usual with Chaucer the love theme has not been treated

as a single subject without any reference to society and philosophy. On the contrary, we are presented the nature and essence of love together with the probable approaches toward it. Finally, it becomes an all-inclusive subject and leads to a subtle satire on man's self-centered motives. However, through his dreamer, who is disoriented in love and who almost always stands apart from his subject, Chaucer presents a concept of love which invites at once several variable conclusions and remains ambiguous as far as the dreamer is concerned.

As regards the nature of the dreamer, it is easily seen that he is again presented as preoccupied with love, perplexed by its ways:

> The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
> Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
> The dredful joye, alwey that slit to yerne:
> Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge
> Astonyeth with his wonderful werkynge
> So sore, iwis, that whan I on hym thynke,
> Nat wot I wel wher that I flete on synke.
>
> (1-7)

The perplexity of the dreamer does not, however, originate from his unfortunate experiences in love. As a recurring characteristic of Chaucer's dreamer, the dreamer of the Parlement of Foules:

> For al be that I knowe not Love in dede,
> Ne wot how that he quiteth folk here hyre,
> Yit happeth me ful ofte in bokes reede
> Of his myrakles and his crewel yre.
>
> (8-11)

Despite this fact, however, the dreamer is eager to learn and write about love, although his desire to supplement his limited awareness is confined to learning only from books. The pronounced fact that the dreamer is disoriented in love and is learning the "craft" only from books is of great significance, not only as a peculiarity of the dreamer but also as lending him an air of impartiality.

Another characteristic of the dreamer is his inability to deal with the problem presented to him. Before proceeding with the conventional reading summarized in portions, the dreamer explains that:

> There rede I wel he wol be lord an syre;
> I dar nat seyn, his strokes been so sore,
> But "God save swich a lord!" I can no moore.
>
> (12-14)

Characteristically he is anxious to cut the introduction short by a question: "But wherfore that I speke al this?" (17).

As usual with Chaucer's dreamer in the other poems, the dreamer of the Parlement of Foules, too, is a devotee of books. As Bethurum has pointed out, he is "the kind of man to whom learning is an absolute necessity".[4]

> .....Nat yoore
> Agon, it happede me for to beholde
> Upon o bok, was write with letters olde,
> And therupon, a certeyn thing to lerne,
> The longe ful faste I redde and yerne.
>
> (17-21)

Here, obviously Chaucer points to the literary and cultural making of a poet and implies that he is himself a learned poet. The dreamer states that

> .....out of olde feldes, as men seyth,
> Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,
> And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere.
>
> (22-25)

These lines embody two interrelated factors. As argued by Boitani (1986:52), one is that of the endless quest of the dreamer that the reading of books implies. The other is the transformation of old books into new uses. It is the way in which the poet both satisfied and

dissatisfied with what he has read produces his own book by connecting the texts he has read and integrating them with his own images and ideas. He certainly finds in them "mater of to wryte" and supplements this matter with his own "connyng" (167-8). The lines above also suggest that the poet presents overtly the intellectual, cultural and creative process whereby the "tradition" is transformed by the "individual talent".[5]

The dreamer is not satisfied with what he has read when he puts his book down because of the lack of light:

> The day faylen, and the derke nyght,
> That reveth bestes from here besynesse,
> Berafte me my bok for lack of lyght,
> And to my bed I gan me for to dresse
> Fulfyld of thought and busy hevynesse;
> For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,
> And ek I nadde that thyng that I wolde.
>
> (85-91)

Contrary to the dreamers of The Book of the Duchess and The House of Fame, the dreamer of the Parlement of Foules does not suffer from an unrequited love or insomnia. On the contrary, his "spirit at the laste/For wery of my labour al the day,/ Tok reste, that made me to slepe faste," (92-4). Unusually again, he comments on the reason of his dreaming Africanus and is completely able

to evaluate the nature of dreams. He states that the recent waking thoughts usually cause us to dream similar happenings while sleeping (99-107). So, contrary to his confusion with regard to love, he demonstrates a considerable amount of confidence about the traditional theories of dreams.[6]

Upon his reading of Somnium Scipionis, the dreamer sees Africanus in his dream, who volunteers to be his guide:

> But thus seyde he: " Thow hast the so wel born
> In lokynge of my olde bok totorn,
> Of which Macrobye roughte nat a lyte,
> That sumdel of thy labour wolde I quyte."
>
> (109-112)

Thus, led by Africanus, the dreamer is relatively removed from direct involvement in the action. Whenever he enters the action it is to comment ambivalently on what he sees. At the gate of the garden, for instance, he is stupefied by the paradoxical inscription on the gate; for

> .....with that oon encresede ay my fere,
> And with that other gan my herte bolde;
> That oon me hatte, that other dide me colde,

As can be observed, the dreamer is uncertain about his own behaviour due to the ambivalence of love and his comment comprises only his own perplexity and its expression.[7] However, it serves also as a pretext to emphasize his lack of experience. Africanus humorously assures the dreamer when he says

> But dred the not to come into this place,
> For this writyng nys nothyng ment bi the,
> Ne by non, but he Loves servaunt be:
> For thow of hast lost thy tast, I gesse,
> As sek man hath of swete and bytternesse.
>
> (157-61)

Africanus' humorous words once again emphasize the dreamer's sense of loss as regards love. As Traversi has emphasized (1987:78), Chaucer characteristically distances himself from his theme and subject, expressedly denying that he, or the dreamer, has any direct knowledge of the theme he has chosen. His disengaged attitude is discernable in the parliament scene as well, where he listens to,and aptly relates, the argument held by the birds. Nowhere in the poem is it possible to come across an explicit remark to indicate that the dreamer thinks likewise or the contrary. In the garden of Love as well as in the parliament scene we are presented two opposing views,each equally emphasized without a conclusive comment. It may even be argued, as also suggested by Spearing (1976:89),

that in the parliament scene the dreamer seems to withdraw from the foreground, and the important thing appears to be the scene itself rather that the dreamer's observations of it.

Like the previous dreamers, the dreamer of the Parlement of Foules is a well-read and learned man. His comments abound in references to classical authors (316). This is another recurrent quality of Chaucer's dreamer and it certainly helps to identify the dreamer with Chaucer. Moreover, Africanus' remark that

> But natheles, although that thow be dul,
> Yit that thow canst not do, yit mayst thow se
> For many a man that may nat stonde a pul,
> It liketh hym at the wrastlyng for to be
> And demeth yit wher he do bet or he
> And if thow haddest connyng for t'endite,
> I shal the shewe mater of to wryte.
>
> (162-68)

presents other humorous self-portraits of Chaucer, a teasing combination of self-effacing modesty and uncommitted aloofness.[8] Thus, the poet is also reduced to the role of the curious onlooker, in search of a subject matter for his poetry, but without an active involvement.

Chaucer's theme in the Parlement of Foules is expressedly love with its perplexities and its paradoxical nature viewed and evaluated by various standpoints. The dreamer's opening words introduce the theme with its full challenge:

> The lyf so short, the craft so longe to lerne,
> Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
> The dredful joye that alwey slit to yerne:
> At this mene I by Love.....

(1-4)

Clemen (1963:131) has rightly maintained that in these lines we are reminded that love is inescapable and compelling; it brooks no rival and certainly involves suffering as well as happiness. The dreamer surrenders hopelessly and the book he reaches for some help turns out to be the Somnium Scipionis, which he reads to learn a 'certeyn thing". However, since the love explained by Africanus falls short of the dreamer's expectations and inquiry, consisting only one of the many aspects of love, Somnium Scipionis proves to contain not the thing he "wolde" (46-49; 73-77).

In his dream, the dreamer comes to the gate of the garden of Love, where he is confused as to what to do: "No wit hadde I, for errour, for to chese,/ To entre

or flen, or me to save or lesse (145-46). His astonishment is due to the two inscriptions on the gate, which are "of ful gret difference". The first is in gold letters and announces the pleasures and healing power of love:

> "Thorgh me men gon into that blysful place
> Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure,
> Thorgh me men gon unto the welle of grace,
> There grene and lusty May shal evere endure.
> This is the wey to al good aventure,
> Be glad, thow redere, and thy sorwe of-caste;
> Al open am I- passe in, and spede thee faste'
>
> (127-33)

However, the other is not much encouraging, giving the pains of love as opposed to the joys embodied in the first inscription:

> "Thorgh me men gon" than spak that other side,
> "Unto the mortal strokes of the spere
> Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,
> There nevere tre shal fruyt ne leves bere,
> This strem yow ledeth to the sorweful were
> There as the fish in prysoun is al drye;
> Th'eschewing is only the remedye!"
>
> (134-40)

Thus, these two inscriptions give fully the paradoxical nature of love and present it as an ambivalent sentiment.

The ambivalence of love and the different possibilities inherent in it are presented in the garden of Love as well. There

> Under a tre, besyde a welle, I say
> Cupide, oure lord, his arwes forge and file;
> And at his fet his bowe al redy lay;
> And Wille, his doughter, temprede al this while
> The hevedes in the welle, and with hire file
> She touchede hem, after they shulde serve
> Some for to sle and some for to wounde and kerve.
>
> (211-17)

Pleasance, Lust, Curtesy, Delight, "Gentilesse", "Beute", "Youthe", "Foolhardynesse", "Flaterye" and "Desyre" all make their appearance as the celebrated figures of love. Venus, with her porter Richness, is there, too. Significantly, the dreamer concludes his narrative by mentioning briefly:

> Semyramis, Candace, and Hercules,
> Biblis, Dido, Thisbe, and Priamus,
> Tristram, Isaude, Paris and Achilles,
> Eleyne, Cleopatre, and Troylus,
> Silla, and ek the moder of Romulus;
> Alle these were peynted on that other syde,
> And al here love, and in what plyt they dyde.
>
> (288-98)

Hence, it may be concluded that, Chaucer once more portrays love with its pleasures and pains.[9] The abstractions and figures inhabiting the garden,Traversi has explained (1987: 84), offer bliss and peace as well as misery and disappointment, and the garden of Love becomes an ambivalent metaphore of love.

Through his dreamer, Chaucer discusses love from various points of view. As explained below, he exhibits the refined idealism of courtly love, the natural reactions of simple creatures "incapable of such exaltation" and their useful but also self-centered motivation (Bronson 1960:43). As Polzella has stated (1976:283), Chaucer certainly is not reluctant to make fun of the extremes of courtly behaviour when the royal eagle, the highest in rank and first to choose its mate steps forward and speaks:

> "Unto my soverayn lady, and not my fere,
> I chese and chese with wil, and herte,and thought,
> The formel on youre hond, so wel iwrought,
> Whos I am al, and evere wol hire serve,
> Do what hire lest, to do me lyve or sterve;
>
> (416-20)

His elaborate proposal (416-41) is in accordance with the conventions of courtly love. However, the dreamer comments that:

> Ryght as the freshe,red rose newe
> Ayeyn the somer sonne coloured is,
> Ryght so for shame al wexen gan the hewe
> Of this formel, whan she herde al this;
> She neyther answerde wel, ne seyde amys,
> So sore abash was she,.....
>
> (442-46)

Her blushing is due to the open declaration of love which indeed does not conform to the courtly love tradition,and therefore is a breach of custom. This may suggest that Chaucer is being slightly satirical of the attitude of the royal eagle.

The second eagle proves to be as outrageous as the first in his claim:

> "That shal nat be!
> I love hir bet than ye don,by Seint John,
> Or at the leste I love hire as wel as ye,
> And lenger have served hire in my degre,
> And if she shulde have loved for long
> lovnge,
> To me ful-longe hadde be guerdonynge,
>
> (448-55)

and assures us that:

> "I dar ek seyn, if she me fynde fals,
> Unkynde, janglere, or rebel any wyse,
> Or jelous, do me hangen by the hals!

> And, but I bere me in hire servyse
> As wel as that my wit can me suffyse,
> From poynt to poynt,hyre honour for to save,
> Take she my lif and al the good I have!
>
> (456-62)

The third eagle likewise pleads for his constancy and service to the formel eagle. In their speeches is exhibited the traditional wooing of a courtly lover. However, the argument which has taken the whole day proves to be fruitless (489-90). The three eagles have claimed to be considerate of the honour of the formel eagle, but to no end in fact. Let alone the business of choosing a mate for themselves, they have even hindered the usual procession of mating. As suggested by Clemen (1963:158), this produces an effect of delicate satire and subtle irony. Because none of the eagles is considerate of Nature's instructions nor of the acknowledged custom. Consequently, the other birds, which represent the common people as opposed to the eagles which stand for nobility,[10] are not slow to react and voice their thoughts about this prolonged plead:

> The noyse of foules for to ben delyvered
> So loude rong, "Have don,and lat us wende"
> .....
> "Com ye of!" they criede, "allas, ye wol us shende!
> Whan shal youre cursede pletynge have an ende?

How sholden a juge eyther parti leve
For ye or nay, withouten any preve?"

(491-97)

Apparently, to the lower birds in the parliament courtly love debate is nothing more than foolishness and nonsense. Their reaction to the plea of the noble birds demonstrates also Chaucer's delight in provoking contrast. Mehl (1986: 50) is right to argue that Chaucer allows courtly love and all conventions that go with it to face the challenge of very different attitudes. With their intercession therefore Chaucer allows various differing perspectives to enter into the domain of love. The lower birds try to arrive at a "working agreement", and it brings about a view incompatible with that of the eagles. The goose, speaking for the waterfowl, remarks: "Al this nys not worth a fly! "(501). The falcon's proposal that "Thanne semeth it there moste be batayle" (539) is at once accepted by all eagles, though not to the satisfaction of the party of the lower birds, who, as members of the committee, are eager to pass their judgment and finish the quarrel as soon as possible. Thus, first the water fowl, or the mercantile class, give their verdict. Obviously this self-centered bold speaker is not completely free of the subtle criticism incorporated in her own words:

She seyde, "Pes! now tak kep every man,
And herkeneth which a resoun I shal forth brynge!
My wit is sharp, I love no taryinge;
I seye I rede hym, though he were my brother,
But she wol love hym, lat hym love another!"

(563-67)

Her argument is scorned by the hawk, whose opinion, it seems, is shared by the noble birds in the assembly(575). The turtle-dove's statement: "Nay, God forbede a lovere shulde chaunge!" (582) as opposed to that of the goose, and her following remarks:

"Though that his lady everemore be straunge,
Yit lat hym serve hire ever, til he be ded.
Forsothe, I preyse nat the goses red
For though she deyede, I wolde non other make;
I Wol ben hires, til that the deth me take."

(584-88)

correspond to the view held by the royal eagles. It might be suggested, therefore, that the seed-fowl, whose spokesman is the turtle-dove, stand for the gentle folk of the country (Bronson 1960:47). They can appreciate the idea of loyalty without thought of reward and clearly loyalty unto death is an ideal they respond. Obviously, because of their akinness to the nobility, they are criticized heavily by the duck, who cannot appreciate the value of unrequited love:

"That men shulde loven alwey causeless,
Who can a resoun fynde or wit in that?
Daunseth he murye that is myrtheless?
Who shulde recche of that is recheles?
Ye quek!" yit seyde the doke, ful wel and fayre,
"Tehere been no sterres, God wot, than a payre!"

(588-95)

The clash of views mounts and finally turns into a harsh insult when the "gentil tercelet" replies:

"Out of the donghil cam that word ful right!
Thow canst nat seen which thyng is wel beset!
Thow farst by love as oules don by lyght::
The day hem blent, ful wel they se by nyght
Thy kynde is of so low a wrechednesse
That what love is,thow canst nat seen ne gesse."

(595-603)

Provoked and irritated by the direction in which the argument is led the cuckoo puts in her word "Lat ech of hem be soleyn al here lyve!" (607). The cuckoo's proposal is subject to ruthless criticism and personal debasing as well. On it, the merlin remarks:

"Ye,have the glotoun fild inow his pounche,
.....
"Thow morthere of the heysoge on the
braunche
That broughte the forth, thow [rewthelees]

> Lyve thow soleyn, wormes corupcion!
> For no fors is of lak of thy nature-
> Go, lewed be thow whil the world may dure!"
>
> (610; 612-16)

It seems, Mehl proposes as well (1986:51), that Chaucer has a certain sympathy for the outspoken impatience of the lower birds, but at the same time he reveals the lack of understanding and insensitivity towards the issue under question. To this, Clemen (1963:163), has added that each standpoint is both right and wrong, and each is shown with subtle irony as both reasonable and at the same time prejudiced. As Nature comments, the debate "in effect yit be nevere the neer." (619). Yet, as the chairman of the assembly, Nature passes her judgment:

> "But finally, this is my conclusioun,
> That she hireself shal han hir eleccioun
> Of whom hire lest; whoso be wroth or blythe,
> Hym that she cheest, he shal hire han as swithe."
>
> (620-23)

Nature's final decision implies that Chaucer is offering individual choice in love as the only alternative when the conditions necessitate it. By so doing, he is also leaving the subject upto individual judgment. He suggests that there is no authoritative definition or attitude that

can be true at all times and in all places (Sklute 1981:127).

The formel's decision is not pleasing to the eagles for she asks:

> "Almyghty queen! unto this yer be gon,
> I axe respit for to avise me,
> And after that to have my choys al fre:
>
> (647-49)

and she decides "nat serve Venus ne-Cupide," (652). Thus, the problem is temporarily settled and each bird is able to choose its mate.

By contrasting different ideals of love, Chaucer may be presenting as well a development apparent in literature between the end of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The pining, over-hopeful lover is then being replaced by a different type, a less patient, more level-headed lover. The debate, therefore, reminds us of the shift from courtly ideals to those of the midle classes.[11]

In the classification of the birds into classes, which, as Traversi has pointed out (1987: 93), is reminiscent of social classes of real people, Chaucer's purpose is to use social satire. However, all the birds are shown as kind or beneficient. The elements of good

and bad, kind and cruel are intermingled throughout the presentation, which obviously suggests that Chaucer deliberately avoids direct criticism by treating each bird equally to create an atmosphere of discord to arouse a critical approach.

In the Parlement of Foules, Chaucer, through his dreamer, presents, it is Stone's conviction as well (1987:158), three kinds of love: The first one is love of social benevolence, or charity, promoted by Africanus, which leads to work for common profit. The second is possesive Lustful obsession which leads to misery exemplified through the figures in the garden of love. Another type of love is natural sexual love which leads to harmonious and honorable mating promoted by Nature and demonstrated in the parliament of fowls.

In the short summary of The Dream of Scipio, the prominent view is that:

> .....what man, lered other lewed
> That lovede commune profyt, wel ithewed,
> He shulde into a blysful place wende,
> There as joye is that last withouten ende.
>
> (46-49)

Scipio's advice, moreover, promises immortality to those who have a genuine love for common profit:

" Know thyself first immortal
And loke besyly thow werche and wysse
To commune profit, and thow shalt not mysse
To comen swiftly to that plae deere
That ful of blysse is and of soles cleere.

(73-77)

The same subject appears to be the concern of the birds' debate, however with some ironic touch this time since what the birds argue for is not in accordance with what they demonstrate.

The second type of love, obviously scorned by Chaucer and dreaded by his dreamer, is represented by Venus and Priapus (253-266). The dreamer's casual remarks and his relief when he returns to the lovely part of the garden emphasizes the point (295-97). In the paradisal park he meets Dame Nature, symbol of fertility, order and harmony, whom the dreamer devotedly admires:

Tho was I war wher that ther sat a queene
That, as of lyght the somer sonne shene
Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure
She fayrer was than any creature.

(298-301)

If his comment full of admiration is to be compared with his disengaged attitude towards Venus, it may be deduced that Venus, in the artificial atmosphere of the temple,

is to be distrusted; while Nature, in her blissful surroundings, is to be praised (Hussey 1981:44). Thus, it may be argued that the roundel at the end of the poem (680-692) celebrates the natural love which also serves the "common profit" as opposed to the lustful love against which the dreamer has been warned by Scipio (79-80).

However, apart from the satisfied, happy birds of the lower classes the questing dreamer is not able to find the exact answers to his questions aroused by the journey:

> I wok, and othere bokes tok me to,
> To rede upon, yit I rede alwey.
> I hope, ywis, to rede so som day
> That I shal mete som thyng for to fare
> The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare.
>
> (695-99)

As Sklute (1981-122) maintains, when the poem ends, the dreamer's comment is one of disappointment, as if his experience had left him in the same state of confusion as had his reading of Somnium Scipionis. However, as Kean (1972:37) sums up, in spite of Chaucer's emphasis on his dependence on books and his lack of experience, his philosophy of love and Nature is certainly put to some kind of practical test when it meets the varied reactions of the birds.

The dreamer, Traversi (1987:84) has suggested, explores the truth of various current notions of love as well as the relation of experience to creative process. So, what we witness in the Parlement of Foules is that Chaucer presents himself as an inadequate lover, but he is able to contemplate the actual behaviour of those subjected to love experience and to turn the results of his reflections into poetic creation. The poet as narrator sets down everything that he reads and sees; however, in the conclusion we are given no final solutions as regards the question of love, validity of experience and reliance on authority.

NOTES

[1] For further information about the historical allegory of The Parlement of Foules see Haldeen Braddy, Geoffrey Chaucer Studies (London: Kennikat Press, 1971) 3-13. Oliver F. Emerson, Chaucer Essays and Studies (Ohio: Western Reserve Univ. Press, 1929) 58-59.

[2] See B.A. Windeatt, Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues, 73-120.

[3] Recent criticism agrees on the view that Chaucer's treatment of conventional material is quite original. See, for instance, Dieter Mehl, Geoffrey Chaucer: An Introduction to His Narrative Poetry, 40.

[4] Quoted in L. Mario Polzella, "'The Craft So Long to Lerne': Poet and Lover in Chaucer's Envoy to Scogan and Parlement of Foules" ChauR 10:4 (1975-76)280.

[5] Piero Boitani "Old Books Brought to Life in Dreams: The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame and The Parlement of Foules" in Piero Boitani and Jill Man eds. The Cambridge Companion (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986) 52. Also see Dieter Mehl 40.

[6] Cf. the dreamer of The House of Fame.

[7] See Wolfgang Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, 139, 147. Also see Derek Traversi, 84.

[8] See Mehl, 43.

[9] Clemen, 139.

[10] See B.H. Bronson, In Search of Chaucer, 47; M.R. Jordan, Chaucer's Poetics and the Modern Reader,93, Mehl, 48.

[11] Clemen, 166.

CHAPTER IV

THE DREAMER IN THE PROLOGUE TO THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women is Chaucer's last example of the dream vision. To summarize Cherniss' (1986:183) argument, it is not merely a simple prologue to a longer poem, but a coherent, self-contained dream poem, of which there exist two versions. The F text is regarded as the earlier and has been thought to have been written around 1386; while the G text, generally regarded as a revision of the original F, is thought to have been written after the death of Queen Anne in 1394.[1] Indeed, to put it in Robinson's words (1967:480), the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women is "steeped in literary associations". Similar to what he does in his three previous dream poems, also for the Prologue Chaucer uses a variety of sources. Among these can be cited Guillaume de Machaut's Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre, Le Dit de la Fleur de Lis et de la Marguerite and Le Dit de la Marguerite. He also borrows from Jean Froissart's Le Dit de la Marguerite and Eustache Deschamps' Le Lay Franchies.[2] However, Chaucer is again experimenting with the conventional material, giving it a Chaucerian "twist", which is discernable in his dreamer as well as his subject matter.

The dreamer in the Prologue is in some respects different from the previous dreamers. As regards the Prologue, it may be argued that a considerable change is noticeable in Chaucer's depiction of the dreamer. First of all, the dreamer appears to be the central figure in the poem, and his dream is concerned with his waking life and waking preoccupations.[3] Unlike the scared, stupefied dreamer of the House of Fame and the disengaged, and mostly watchful persona of the Parlement of Foules, the persona of the Prologue does not only observe but also actively participates in the action. In the whole poem, there is never a matter that must be explained or answered by the dreamer's journey. On the contrary, we have a dreamer who must testify the truth of his own books and his loyalty to the God of Love as a poet.[4]

However, very much like the other examples, this dreamer's narration begins with the themes of pain and bliss respectively in hell and in heaven (1-3) and, as usual, leads the argument to the common classical and Christian sources. He is again presented as a devotee of books. His argument is that:

> That mote we to bokes that we fynde,
> Thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde,
> And to the doctrine of these olde wyse,
> Yeve credence, in every skylful wise,
>
> (17-20)

and proposes that "Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve/These bokes, ther we han noon other preve."(27-8). He also states that:

> And as for me, though that I konne but lyte,
> On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
> And to hem yive I feyt and ful credence,
> And in myn herte have hem in reverence.
>
> (29-32)

Thus, he appears to share the characteristics:bookishness, humbleness and professed inadequacy with the previous dreamers. Yet, while in the previous dreams nothing can hinder him from his study, we realize that in the Prologue his interest in books is challenged:

> What that the month of May
> Is comen, and that I here the foules synge.
> And that the floures gynen for to springe,
> Farewel my bok, and my devocioun!
> .....
> Thanne I love the most thise floures white
> and rede,
> Swiche as men callen daysyes in our toun.
> To hem have I so gret affeccioun,
>
> (36-39; 42-44)

This statement points to an ironical contrast with the situation of the previous dreamers, and therefore is of high importance. Obviously, the dreamer of the Prologue

does not only read about love in books, but also experiences love itself in his devotion to the daisy. Moreover, he also experiences such a joy that he himself appears to take part in the rebirth in Nature. It is certainly a renewal of life for him. Furthermore, there is no suffering from an unknown sickness or sleeplessness or tiring study of books. The dreamer appears to be an energetic, over-hopeful, happy lover who cannot live away from the presence of his beloved. His elaborate description of the daisy (45-59) and his openly declared devotion to her are all new for us. The so far inexperienced dreamer, who has been preoccupied with love overtly or tacitly, is, now in love and hence his so far disengaged, non-committal attitude has changed considerably. In the previous dream poems the dreamer's task has been to relate the pains and joys of others without a conclusive remark. Yet, now he is inviting the reader to admire his flower and to acknowledge and appreciate his love for her:

Whanne comen is the May,
That in my bed ther daweth me no day
That I nam up and walkyng in the mede
To seen this flour ayein the sonne sprede,
Whan it upryseth erly by the morwe.
That blisful sighte softneth al my sorwe,
So glad am I, whan that I have her presence
Of it, to doon it alle reverence
As she that is of alle floures flour
Fulfilled of al vertu and honour,
And evere ilyke faire, and fresh of hewe,

> And I love it, and ever ylike newe,
> And evere shal, til that myn herte dye.
> Al swere I nat, of this I wol nat lye,
> Ther loved no wight hotter in his lyve.[5]
>
> (45-59)

Thus, the dreamer gives also a full account of his feelings. Yet, he is aware of his double task and assures the reader:

> But wherfore that I spak, to give credence
> To olde stories and doon hem reverence
> And that men mosten more thyng beleve
> The men may seen at eye, or elles preve-
> That shall I seyn, whanne that I see my tyme;
> I may not al at-ones speke in ryme.
>
> (97-102)

and explains that:

> My besy gost, that thursteth alwey newe
> To seen this flour so yong, so fresh of hewe,
> Constreyned me with so gledy desir
> That in myn herte I feele yet the fir
> That made me to ryse, er yt were day.
>
> (103-107)

So, instead of his usual habit of reading, the dreamer spends all his time with this daisy and he prepares his bed, again surprisingly, outside and sleeps watching the

stars and smelling the sweet odour of the flowers(205-207). Certainly the dreamer's second devotion proves to be much more powerful than his devotion to books. Consequently, instead of the cameralike dreamer of The Parlement of Foules, now we have a dreamer who himself has much to say, not about what he sees, but about himself: his experiences, his feelings, his occupation.[6] Quite unusually, the whole part preceding the dream proper is devoted to the dreamer himself.

The waking persona preserves his responsive and relatively impulsive characteristic in the dream section as well, When he encounters the beautiful lady accompanying the God of Love, he instantly sings a "balade" in praise of her (249-69), and immediately identifies her with the daisy of his waking life (224). The dreamer in the Prologue is, as far as Payne (1975:202) is concerned, very close to Chaucer himself in identity; therefore,the Prologue appears to be the most personal, even autobiographical, of all Chaucer's dream poems. This is of course obvious from the Prologue, where Chaucer's early works are all listed:[7]

> Tho maist yt nat denye,
> For in pleyn text, withouten nede of glose,
> Thou hast translated the Romaunce of the Rose,
> .....
> And of Creseyde thou hast seyd as the lyste,

That maketh men to wommen lasse triste.

(327-29; 332-33)

This is further reiterated in Alceste's references:

> He made the book hight the Hous of Fame
> And eke the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse,
> And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse
> And al the love of Palamon and Arcite
> Of Thebes, thogh the storye ys knowen lyte;
> And many an ympne your halydayes,
> That highten balades, roundels, virelayes;
>
> (417-23)

Yet, his ambivalent nature is never completely clarified. On the contrary, by some additional details Chaucer makes his dreamer all the more complex for the reader. On the one hand, there are the direct references which make the identification definite, and on the other hand, as being not very bright (362) and "Hym rekketh noght of what matere he take." (365) while writing his poetry, the dreamer falls short of it. However, these humiliating remarks do also, as in the three previous poems, lend the depiction of the dreamer that Chaucerian humour and present a "highly individual and teasingly ambiguous self-portrait".[8]

Another significant point in the Prologue is the function of the dreamer. He does not seem to be dissatisfied

with the books; on the contrary, he gives full credit to whatever is written in the books (18-28). He is not in search of a matter whether it is love, fame or poetic creativity. He is fully obsessed by the daisy in his waking life and in his dream as well he has the daisy as the embodiment of true love. He does not go anywhere in his dream, the setting is the same beautiful garden of his waking life, and no guide is provided for him. The question is: For what purpose did Chaucer create an impulsive, devoted, willing persona, if he was not going to use him for discussion of some obviously philosophical or literary truths, for the dream too appears to be devoted to dreamer's offence against the God of Love and his penance? The answer does not come as readily as it does in the previous poems. Yet, one of the objectives of Chaucer appears to be the value of the books and their content. The Dreamer several times assures the reader that the old books are rich reserves of knowledge and whenever there is some uncertainty about a subject "Yeve credence, in every skylful wise,/ That tellen of these olde appreved stories" (20-21). Therefore, we can argue that at the very beginning the dreamer gives a very good account of the true function of literature and states the really indispensable contribution of books to the whole culture.[9] The dreamer states that the written texts can tell us about things we have not seen and cannot see ourselves and thus enrich our knowledge to the extent that we can not reach with our experience:

A thousand sythes have I herd men telle
That there is joye in hevene and peyne
in helle,
And I acorde wel that it be so;
But natheles, this wot I wel also,
That there ne is non that dwelleth in
this contre,
That eyther hath in helle or hevene ybe,
Ne may of it non other weyes witen,
But as he hath herd seyd or founde it writen;
For by assay there may no man it preve.
But Goddes forbode, but men shulde leve
Wel more thyng than han seyn with ye!
Men shal nat wenen every thyng a lye,
For, God wot, thing is never the lasse
sooth,
Thogh every wight ne may it nat ysee.

(G 1-15)

Chaucer, in the dreamer's account, emphasizes the fact that we should believe in what the books say, because the poets testify their reality. Thus, similar to the view in the Parlement of Foules, literature is seen as a kind of collective memory preserving the knowledge and thus the world of facts and ideas that would otherwise be lost and would not be transformed by "individual talent":

Thanne mote we to bokes that we fynde,
Thourgh whiche that olde thynges ben in
mynde,

And to the doctryne of these olde wyse
Yeven credence, in every skylful wyse,
And trowen on these olde aproved storyes
Of holynesse, of regnes, of victoryes,
Of love, of hate, of othere sondry thynges,
Of which I may nat make rehersynges.
And if that olde bokes weren aweye,
Yloren were of remembrance the keye.
Wel oughte us thanne on olde bokes leve,
There as there is non other assay by preve.

(G 17-28)

The same subject is taken up somewhat differently in his dream. The God of Love's treatment of the dreamer is not encouraging, it is obviously insulting:

" What dostow
her
So nygh myn oune floure, so boldely?
Yt were better worthy, trewely,
A worm to neghen ner my flour than thow."

(315-18)

The reason, obviously, is the main theme of the dreamer's books. Cupid proceeds:

And thow my foo, and al my folk werreyest,
And of myn old servauntes thow mysseyest,
And hynderest hem with thy translacioun,
And lettest folk from hire devocioun

To serve me, and holdest it folye
To serve Love.

(322-27)

The God of Love's argument is that by translating the Romance of the Rose and by writing Troilus and Criseyde the dreamer has wronged the God of Love; his presentation of love has been misleading, and consequently people have all become the enemy of Love. Actually, as Mehl(1986:120) has pointed out, the dreamer is treated in a more unpleasant and condescending manner than in any of the previous dreams. Instead of being rewarded for his interest in Love, he is turned away as the "mortal fo" of the God of Love (G 248) and his love poetry is held against him as heresy and betrayal to Love's cause (327-35).

With Alceste's intercession the question gains another dimension. Her remarks, while ironically pointing to the naivety of the dreamer and certainly adding to self-portrait of Chaucer, bring in the view that the offensive doctrines are not intentional. The dreamer later will have the courage to contradict the both views, but so far, as Alceste argues, he has written those books because:

Or him was boden maken thilke tweye
Of som persone, and durste yt nat withseye;
Or him repenteth outrely of this,

> He ne hath nat doon so grevously amys
> To translaten that olde clerkes writen,
>
> (366-70)

Evidently, these lines present Chaucer as an able translator as well as pointing to the common practice of that time. As Cherniss (1986:192) maintains, Alceste's excuse for the dreamer suggests that he was not aware of the implications of his poetic matter, for most probably he was ordered by some important personage to write the offending poems. Besides he has only translated the works of "olde clerkes" and transformed the preserved knowledge. Although he does not write very well, he has tried to serve Cupid in his earlier works.

However, the dreamer is anxious to speak for his cause, and upon the verdict of the God of Love he says:

> But trewely I wende, as in this cas,
> Naught have agilt, ne doon to love trespas.
> For-why a trewe man, withouten drede,
> Hath nat to parten with a theves dede;

Unlike the previous dreamers, he does not leave the judgement to the reader, he does not overlook the ironical defence of Alceste, which reduces him to an inadequate, blundering person.He does claim the authorship of the

books he has written and means to correct, what he thinks it is, a misunderstanding:[10]

> Ne a trewe lover ought me not to blame,
> Thogh that I speke a fals lovere som shame.
> They oghte rather with me for to holde,
> For that I of Creseyde wroot or tolde,
> Or of the Rose; what so myn auctor mente,
> Algate, God woot, yt was my entente
> To fortren trouthe in love and yt cheryce,
> And to ben war fro falsnesse and fro vice
> By swich ensample; this was my menynge."
>
> (466-74)

However, neither Alceste nor Cupid will listen to this argument. Both Cupid with prejudice and Alceste as a mediator condemn his books as being against Love. The dreamer's defence of his poetry proves to be inefficient and, in fact, too weak to face the charge of Cupid. Cupid asks for absolute acknowledgement of the virtue of his devoted women and will not approve any ambivalent approach to the law of Love. Alceste's soothing words to the God of Love are followed by a rebuke to the dreamer, who tries to get his books accepted as they are:

> ....."Lat be thy arguynge,
> For Love ne wol nat counterpleted be
> In ryght ne wrong, and lerne that at me!
> Thow hast thy grace, and hold the ryght therto.

> Now wol I seyn what penance thou shalt to
> For thy trespas,.....
>
> (475-80)

The God of Love is certainly a narrow-minded, self-important and the most biased critic of the works of the dreamer. His indisputable conviction that women are "...clene maydenes... and trewe wyves"/"...stedefastet widewes durynge alle here lyves" (G 282-83) leads him to misunderstand the dreamer's intentions completely.For Cupid, love, which is wronged by the dreamer, is woman's fidelity and her suffering and there will be no argument about it.

Hence, as usual with Chaucer we have two perspectives of the same question. How would the reader interpret the stories under question? Is Chaucer parodying the probable approaches to his works and to other literary pieces? Whose argument is more reliable? That of the dreamer's sounds more logical, but still does not take away the charge of antifeminism detected in his books. There is no escape, he will do penance for the alleged offense and will write a legend of good women at the expense of defaming men. This forced project suggests that Chaucer by no means accepts Cupid's judgment on the doctrines of the books uncritically, since, to quote from Cherniss (1986:195),the dreamer does not completely admit

his guilt, and yet he does not completely deny Cupid's, charge of heresy.

Another theme of Chaucer in the Prologue is the fidelity and virtue in love. The dreamer's fervent devotion to the daisy which turns out to be queen Alceste, who prefers death to disloyalty to her husband emphasizes the fact that Chaucer, by having Alceste on his side, promotes true love.

Alceste is presented as the embodiment of the ideal love which Cupid commands the dreamer to write about (549).[11] Furthermore, Alceste, too, demands the dreamer to exemplify the fidelity and virtue of women in love in his projected legend (481-85). And Cupid, as the authoritative figure in the dream, declares that "Ne shal no trewe lover come in helle" (553) and proceeds towards heaven with his followers who will be the heroines of The Legend of Good Women.

Finally the dream offers the dreamer the proof of the truth of old stories:

> Hastow nat in a book, lyth in thy cheste
> The grete goodnesse of the quene Alceste,
> That turned was into dayesy;
> She that for hire housbonde chees to dye,
> And eke to goon to helle, rather than he,

> And Ercules rescowed hire, parde,
> And broght hir out of helle agayn to blys?"
> And I answerd ageyn, and sayde, "Yis,
> Now knowe I hire.....

(510-18)

The dreamer has not only Alceste's story but also visionary evidence of her virtue in her elevated status in the other world. Hence the truth of the doctrines of the books and the true love are reaffirmed and reconciled. The dreamer does not seem to be dissatisfied with his dream. Although he does not respond willingly to the instruction of Alceste, still the teaching is quite articulate and definite to him. He knows what he is going to do:

> And with that word, of slep I gan awake,
> And ryght thus on my Legende gan I make.

(G 544-45)

Contend with what he has witnessed, having realized that there is no outlet except for bowing to the conditions of necessity, even to some extent satisfied with his new task, the dreamer returns to "my bokes gan I take," (578)

Another subject presented by Chaucer is envy as an influential factor in man's life. Aleeste's defence of the dreamer comprises a long lecture on the art of

being a God, an authority, and on the prejudiced, arbitrary advice. Alceste's following words bring about envy as a vice pertaining to all ages and thus leading to disasters of every kind:

> Thanne myght yt be as I yow tellen shal:
> This man to yow may falsly ben accused,
> Ther as by right him oughte ben excused.
> For in your court ys many a losengeour,
> And many a queynte totelere accusour,
> That tabouren in youre eres many a sown,
> Ryght after hire ymagynacioun,
> To have your daliance, and for envie
> Thise ben the causes, and I shal not lye.
> Envie ys lavendere of the court alway,
> For she parteth, neither nyght ne day,
> Out of the hous of Cesar; thus seith Dante,
>
> (349-60)

However, Alceste's comparison of the dreamer with the great figures of the past, with Ceasar for instance, certainly carries some ironic implications as well. Thus Chaucer, whenever the conditions permit, continues his subtle play with the dreamer as well as with his subject. By presenting one reason of his unpopularity at the Love's court, he also points to one of the commonest sins of mankind, yet, by allowing the dreamer to contradict the view uttered in defense of him, Chaucer creates another puzzle for the reader.

Still, there is enough evidence to conclude that Chaucer's dreamer in the Prologue is to be identified with him; that he surprisingly does not share the bewilderment of the previous dreamers demonstrated at the beginning and at the end of their dreams. He seems to have no problem with regard to the doctrine of the books and the matter taught to him in his dream. Furthermore, Chaucer, by using this clear-minded, "happy" dreamer, states that the doctrines of the books and reality are compatible. Chaucer also creates a fine picture of true love, and, by making his dreamer to be an ardent devotee of this love, appears to be promoting it. However, in accordance with Jordan's view (1987:104), it must be noted that Chaucer maintains an extraordinary poetic objectivity toward "the conflicting claims of the world's diversity of things (and) ideas" and does never present his ideas without an air of impartiality.

NOTES

[1] See F.N. Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 480-81.; Michael D. Cherniss, "Chaucer's Last Dream Vision: The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women "ChauR 20:3 (1986) 183. In this chapter we will be dealing primarily with the F text; however, when necessary, the G text will be used as well.

[2] See Windeatt, Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues 139-52.

[3] Cherniss, 184.

[4] See Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remenbrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven, Conn: Yale Univ. Press, 1963) 111, quoted in Robert M. Jordan, Chaucer's Poetics and the Modern Reader, 100. Also see Dieter Mehl, Geoffrey Chaucer: An Introduction to His Narrative Poetry, 99.

[5] My italics.

[6] See John Norton-Smith, Medieval Authors: Geoffrey Chaucer (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) 62.

[7] Also see R.M. Jordan, Chaucer's Poetics and the Modern Reader, 105, 114.

[8] Dieter Mehl, 103

[9] Mehl, 99.

[10] For a different argument see A.C. Spearing, Medieval Dream Poetry, 106.

[11] Spearing, 108.

CONCLUSION

As one of the most popular literary forms of the medieval literature, dream poetry, during the process of its formation, developed certain conventions, which were followed by most of the writers of the period. However, Chaucer, one of the prominent poets of medieval English literature, has been to a great extent a nonconformist as regards the dreamer of his poems and the general purpose for which he uses the dreamer. Therefore, his dreamers in The Book of the Duchess, The Parlement of Foules, The House of Fame and the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women are depicted freely. As far as their personal traits, nature and functions are concerned they have hardly any common characteristics with the traditional dreamer.

In the light of this study, it has been decided that although Chaucer's dreamer differs from the conventional dreamer, all of the dreamers of the four poems dealt with in this thesis have certain common features. Chaucer, in his four dream poems, depicts the dreamer as a devotee of books. He is constantly in search of a new thing to learn and write about. One of the issues he is especially interested in is love and this theme is kept on the foreground throughout all of the poems. One other characteristic of the dreamer is that

he has no direct knowledge of love nor anything related to it. Hence, he is portrayed as inexperienced as far as love is concerned.

Chaucer, in the Book of the Duchess, the House of Fame and the Parlement of Foules, with his presentation of the dreamer, now portraying him as a naive dolt, now a short-witted middle aged worn-out man and now a cultivated man of learning, raises questions as regards the identity of the dreamer. However, despite this ambiguity, the rare allusions in the poems suggest that the dreamers of the four dream poems are identical with Chaucer and, in their portrait Chaucer, indeed, creates a humorous self-portrait of himself.

Another characteristic of the dreamer detected in the poems is obviously his disengaged attitude, which he displays in his narration lacking proper comment and conclusion.

Hence, in this study it has been observed that in the Book of the Duchess, Chaucer's dreamer versus the traditional dreamer as being multi-functional. Among his numerous functions, which can be summed up as discussion of the influence of death on man's life, love, sympathy and respect offered to John of Gaunt, one remarkable function of the dreamer is his use of his considerably

rich knowledge of psychology, philosophy and classical mythology to console the duke. Thus, moreover, as a reversal of the traditional practice, not himself but his interlocutor is made the recipient of instruction. As regards his nature, at the beginning he is presented as a naive, simple person and this feigned attitude is preserved throughout the poem, giving, however, enough clue to define his actual character as a tactful,mature, understanding, tolerant modest person.

The dreamer of the House of Fame reminds us the dreamer of the Book of the Duchess with his extreme interest in books and with his affected inability. Additionally, however, Chaucer's mocking self-portrait is furthered to the extent that the dreamer in the eagle's talons is subjected to severe humiliation. The dreamer of the House of Fame, contrary to the natural desire of the conventional dreamer for more information, is not willing to learn anything and consequently is given a forced lecture. Through his dreamer's unwillingness and instable attitude Chaucer ridicules the didactic tendency in the conventional dream poems as well as the effort and failures of the poet in the process of creating a work of art.

In the House of Fame, moreover, Fame has been discussed at lenght, pictured and exemplified in her

various appearances, and definitely denounced by Chaucer as a source of inspiration and a reliable agent.

The dreamer, for the most part, preserves his uncommitted attitude, yet sometimes, ironically enough, he claims authorship of the story or stories he is to summarize. Moreover, overtaking the role of traditional instructor in the dream, he tends to moralize, to use his story to educate his audience. Similar to the dreamer's search for additional knowledge in the Book of the Duchess, the dreamer in the House of Fame also pursues the experience that may provide him with new "tydynges", especially of love, which he is told he may find in the House of Fame. However, his journey does not prove to be as satisfactory as he has expected.

In the Parlement of Foules, he, again, meets us as a reading person, trying to answer certain questions. His dream in this case provides him a lively debate of love at a parliement of fowls, by which Chaucer presents various ideals of love and undoubtedly puts all of these ideals to trial with respect to their practicability and truthfulness. It seems that again the dreamer is not satisfied with his experience and is not relieved from his confusion as regards the knowledge of love, whose different aspects are promoted by Africanus, represented by Venus and exemplified in the parliament of fowls

respectively. Throughout the poem, however, he preserves his detachment from his subject. In the Parlement of Fouls as well, the dreamer's identity, in spite of certain implications about his being a poet in the service of love and being usually unsuccessful and unimportant for the god of Love, keeps the continual ambiguity as regards the question whether he is Chaucer or not.

However, the ambiguity lingering about his nature is brought to light completely in The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, where the dreamer shares almost all of the characteristics of the previous dreamers. Besides, his lack of experience in love is replaced by his devotion to a daisy which turns out to be the symbol of true love, and so far implicit identification with Chaucer is made explicit by direct references to the poems written by Chaucer. In the Prologue, therefore, it has been determined that the dreamer of the Book of the Duchess, the House of Fame, The Parlement of Foules and the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, despite minor variances in their nature, is Chaucer, which is testified by the very existence of the poems themselves. In the Prologue, moreover, the dreamer as Chaucer gives full credit to the old books and acknowledges them as rich reserves of knowledge. Another function of the dreamer in the prologue is to Promote true love and criticize biased unreliable literary criticism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

BOETHIUS

1969 The Consolation of Philosophy.
B. RADICE and R. BALDICK (Eds)
(Trans. V. E. Watts),
Aylesbury: Hazell.

CHAUCER, Geoffrey

1957 The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer.
F. N. ROBINSON (Ed.)
Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

DANTE, Alighieri

1952 The Divine Comedy.
(Trans. C. E. Norton)
Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica.

DE LILLE, Alan

1908 The Complaint of Nature.
A.S. COOK (Ed.),(Trans. D.M. Moffat)
New York: Holt.

LORRIS, G. de and J. de MEUN

1971 The Romance of the Rose.
(Trans. C. Dahlberg),
New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press.

SECONDARY SOURCES

AERS, David

1981 "The Parlement of Foules: Authority, the Knower and the Known."
ChauR, XVI, 1: 1-17.

BAUM, P. Franklin

1958 Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation.
Durham: N.C. Duke Univ. Press.

BENNETT, J. A. Valter

1965 The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation.
Oxford: Clarendon Press.

1968 Chaucer's "Book of Fame": An Exposition of the House of Fame.
Oxford: Clarendon Press.

BETHURUM, Dorothy

1970 "Chaucer's Point of View As Narrator in the Love Poems."
J.R. SCHOECK and J. TAYLOR (Eds.), Chaucer Criticism: An Anthology.
Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, Vol. 2, 211-31

BOITANI, Piero

1986 "Old Books Brought to Life in Dreams."
P. BOITANI and J. MANN (Eds), The Cambridge Chaucer Companion.
Cambridge: Cambridge Univ.Press, 39-57.

BOWDEN, Muriel Amanda

1967 A Reader's Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer.
New York: Hudson.

BRADDY, Haldeen

1971 Geoffrey Chaucer: Literary and Historical Studies.
Port Washington: Kennikat Press.

BREWER, D. Stanley, ed.

1966 Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature.
London: Nelson.

1978 Chaucer: The Critical Heritage.
London: Routledge.

BRONSON, B. Harris

1960 In Search of Chaucer,
Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.

1965 "The Book of the Duchess Re-opened."
E. WAGENKNECHT (Ed.), Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism.
New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

BRUSENDORF, Aage

1968 The Chaucer Tradition.
Oxford: Clarendon Press.

BURLIN, Robert B.

1977 Chaucerian Fiction.
Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

CHERNISS, D. Michael

1986 "Chaucer's Last Dream Vision: The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women." ChauR XX, 3: 182-199.

CLEMEN, Wolfgang

1963 Chaucer's Early Poetry.
(Trans. C.A.M. Sym.),
London: Methuen

COGHILL, Nevill

1971 The Poet Chaucer.
London: Oxford Univ. Press.

CUMMINGS, H. Maurice

1965 The Indebtness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccacio.
New York: Haskel House.

DAVID, Alfred

1976 The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer's Poetry.
Bloomington: Indiana Univ.

DELANY, Sheila

1972 Chaucer's House of Fame
Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press.

ELIASON, E. Norman

1973 "Chaucer the Love Poet."
J. MITCHELL and W. PROVOST (Ed.) Chaucer the Love Poet.
Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 9-26

EVERETT, Dorothy

1967 Essays on Middle English Literature.
P. KEAN (Ed.)
Oxford: Clarendon.

FANSLER, D. Spruill

1965 Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose.
Gloucester: P. Smith.

FRIEDMAN, B. John

1969 "The Dreamer, The Whelp, and Consolation in The Book of the Duchess."
ChauR 3: 145-62.

FYLER, John M.

1977 "Irony and the Age of Gold in the Book of the Duchess.
Speculum 52: 314-28.

HUSSEY, S.S.

1981 Chaucer: An Introduction.
London: Methuen.

JEFFERSON, B. Levi

1968 Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius. New York: Gordian Press.

JORDAN, M. Robert

1983 "Lost in the Funhouse of Fame: Chaucer and Postmodernism."
ChauR XVIII, 2: 100-105.

1987 Chaucer's Poetics and the Modern Reader.
Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

KEAN, P.M.

1972 Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

KELLOGG, A. Latimer

1972 Chaucer, Langland, Arthur: Essays in Middle En English Literature. New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press.

KITTREDGE, L. George

1967 Chaucer and His Poetry. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

KOONCE, B.G.

1966 Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in the House of Fame. New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press.

LAWLOR, John

1967 "The Earlier Poems." D.S. BREWER (Ed.) Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature. London: Nelson, 39-64.

1970 "The Pattern of Consolation in the Book of the Duchess." J.R. SCHOECK and J. TAYLOR (Eds.) Chaucer Criticism: An Anthology. Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press. Vol. 2, 232-260.

McCALL, John P.

1971 "The Harmony of Chaucer's Parliament." ChauR 5: 22-31.

McDONALD, O. Charles

1959 "An Interpretation of the Parlement of Foules."
E. WAGENKNECHT (Ed.) Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism.
New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 309-327.

MEHL, Dieter

1986 Geoffrey Chaucer: An Introducttion to His Narrative Poetry.
Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

MILLER, T. Jacqueline

1982 "The Writing on the Wall: Authority and Authorship in Chaucer's House of Fame."
ChauR XVII, 2: 95-115.

MUSCATINE, Charles

1957 Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning.
Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

O.S.O. CARSON, Angela M.

1967 "Easing of the 'Hert' in the Book of the Duchess."
ChauR I, 3: 157-160.

PAYNE, O. Robert

1975 "Making His Own Myth: The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women."
ChauR IX, 3: 197-211.

PHILLIPS, Helen

1981 "Structure and Consolation in the Book of the Duchess."
ChauR XVI, 2: 107-118.

POLZELLA, L. Marion.

1976 "'The Craft So Long to Lerne' Poet and Lover in Chaucer's Envoy to Scogan and Parlement of Foules."
ChauR X, 4: 279-86.

ROWLAND, Beryl, ed.

1979 Companion to Chaucer Studies.
New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

RUGGIERS, G. Paul

1959 "The Unity of Chaucer's House of Fame."
E. WAGENKNECT (Ed.) Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism.
New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 295-308

SEDGWICK, H. Dwight

1971 Dan Chaucer: An Introduction to the Poet, His Poetry and His Times.
New York: AMS Press.

SKLUTE, M. Larry

1981 "The Inconclusive Form of the Parlement of Foules."
ChauR XVI, 2: 119-28.

SMITH-NORTON, John

1974 Medieval Authors: Geoffrey Chaucer.
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

SPEARING, A.C.

1976 Medieval Dream Poetry
Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

SPEIRS, John

1967 Chaucer the Maker.
London: Faber.

STONE, Brian

1987 Chaucer: A Critical Study.
Harmondsworth: Penguin.

TATLOCK, P.S.J.

1966 The Mind and Art of Chaucer.
New York: Gordian Press.

TRAVERSI, Derek

1987 Chaucer the Earlier Poetry: A Study in Poetic Development.
Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press.

WHITMAN, H.F.

1969 "Exegesis and Chaucer's Dream Visions."
ChauR 3: 229-38.

WILHELM, J.J.

1967 "The Narrator and His Narrative in Chaucer's Parlement."
ChauR 1: 201-6.

WILSON, S. William

1967 "Scholastic Logic in Chaucer's House of Fame."
ChauR 1: 181-84.

WIMSATT, I.J.

1968 Chaucer and the French Love Poets.
Chapell Hill.

WINDEATT, B.A. ed, trans.

1982 Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues.
Woodbridge: Brewer.